

Featuring  
the art of

HEAVENLY SWORD

METAL GEAR SOLID

HALO

HALF-LIFE 2

# FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

# ImagineFX

*Become a*

## GAMES ARTIST

How you can make it in the  
world of video game art

Turn to page 48

*Interview*  
**JP TARGETE**

*"Take your sketchbook to  
school, dinner, the  
toilet and bed"*

### PERFECT SKIN & HAIR

The brushes you need to  
paint beautiful humanoids



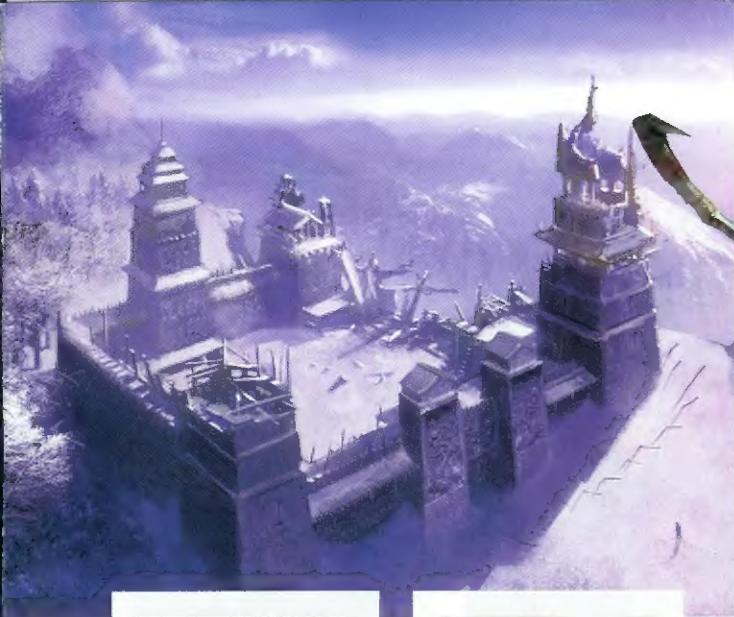
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Below: Alessandro's simple yet beautiful concept work for Heavenly Sword's Kai character.

*The video game art of...*

## ALESSANDRO TAINI



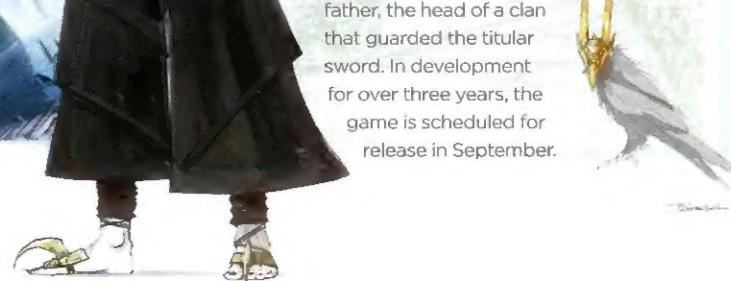
Above and left: A selection of Alessandro's stunning environment and character work for SCEA's forthcoming PS3 title Heavenly Sword.

**B**orn in Genoa in 1973, where he studied illustration and advertising at the School of Visual Communication, Alessandro "Talexi" Taini began his career as a creative designer for numerous advertising companies, moonlighting as a freelance cover illustrator for books. Following a move from Milan to Cambridge he began work as concept artist in the film industry, his first job being *Luminal*, an eccentric sci-fi drama set in 2010, filmed in 2004. Together with the film's writer, the famed Italian pulp novelist Isabella Santacroce, he then produced his first illustration book, entitled *Dark Demonia*.

His work on *Heavenly Sword*, however, a flagship action title for Sony's PlayStation 3, has drawn legions of fans to its opulent environments and sassy heroine, Nariko. With only a few days left to live, Nariko sets out to avenge the death of her father, the head of a clan that guarded the titular sword. In development for over three years, the game is scheduled for release in September.



Turn to page 42 to see the game art of **Viktor Antonov**



# Introducing...

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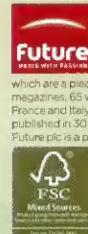
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# Featured artists

Every month ImagineFX calls on the finest digital artists in the world to offer you the best guidance and to share their techniques and inspiration...



### JP Targette



JP is an accomplished digital and traditional illustrator, concept artist

and art director for books and video games with 17 years experience. He has been doing illustration and concept art for book and RPG publishers, video games and production companies, and is working on a sci-fi fantasy graphic novel. Learn more on page 56.

[www.targetteart.com](http://www.targetteart.com)



### Andrew Jones



ImagineFX regular contributing artist Andrew has recently been on the Bassnectar tour of the US, doing live paintings on stage (see [www.bassnectar.net](http://www.bassnectar.net)). He even hooked up his Wacom to a guitar strap! Check out his take on game character concept art in Painter in our regular Painter Skills feature on page 96.

[www.androidjones.com](http://www.androidjones.com)



### Xavier Marquis



Xavier Marquis is a games concept artist at Guerrilla Games – a company most famous for its Killzone series on PlayStation 2, PSP and soon PS3. Read all about his inspiration, techniques and working methods (as well as checking out his absolutely stunning concept art) in our Portrait of an Artist interview, beginning on page 62.

[www.xavier-marquis.com](http://www.xavier-marquis.com)



### Christian Bravery



The former Lionhead Studios man (Christian was Art Director on Black & White 2) swings by this month to give you a masterclass in games concept art (begins on page 74). Christian recently set up his own studio – Leading Light Conceptual Design – and has already bagged clients such as EA, Sony and Stormfront. Check out his site below...

[www.leadinglightdesign.co.uk](http://www.leadinglightdesign.co.uk)

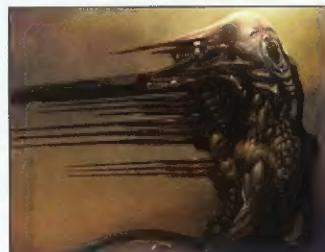


### Marta Dahlig



Polish freelance artist and illustrator Marta Dahlig returns to ImagineFX in fine form this month, with an essential guide to custom brushes, focusing on painting skin and hair. Turn to page 92 now, and fire up your free DVD to load up Marta's own custom brushes. Look out for part two – exploring brushes used for painting fabrics – coming next month.

[www.marta-dahlig.com](http://www.marta-dahlig.com)



### Francis Tsai



Having worked on titles including Star Trek Online, Darkwatch, SpyHunter 2 and Tomb Raider: Anniversary, Francis Tsai is the perfect man to offer you 20 essential tips on becoming a games concept artist (page 86). Interesting fact: Francis studied physical chemistry and architecture before pursuing his current career in TV, games, comics and film.

[www.teamgt.com](http://www.teamgt.com)

# Welcome... to the art of video games



Over the course of this issue, you'll see some of the most striking, beautifully painted and rendered artwork of the moment. And what have these pieces got in common? Yep, you got it, they are all concept work for video games.

This month, we bring you the ultimate guide to becoming a game concept artist. First up is our massive

cover feature (page 48) where leading artists tell you what it takes to become a games artist. Next, Francis Tsai offers you 20 top tips for breaking into the games industry as an artist (page 86). And then we have a special themed Q&A (page 34) with the likes of Andy Park (God of War 2) Glen Angus (Marvel Ultimate Alliance) and Daniel Dociu (Guild Wars) answering your game art-related questions.

Rounding it all off is an interview with Killzone artist Xavier Marquis, and an awesome workshop from Leading Light Conceptual Design's Christian Bravery. If you're into game art, you've come to the right place.

There's far too much else going on this issue to discuss it here – flip over for the full contents. As ever, I'd love to know what you think of the issue. Until next time...

Cheers!

Rob Carney, Editor  
rob@imaginefx.com

## Tell us what you think!

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# Subscribe now! Turn to page 29 United States readers turn to page 73

## Five things...

you'll find in this issue of ImagineFX

### 1 World events

Discover fantasy and sci-fi art events in your area with our in-depth events section. See page 30

### 2 Miki you're so fine!

This issue we bring you the full Poser model, Miki 1.0. Load her up and render away! page 98

### 3 Legendary game art

Throughout the issue, look out for some amazing concept art from such games as MGS and Halo.

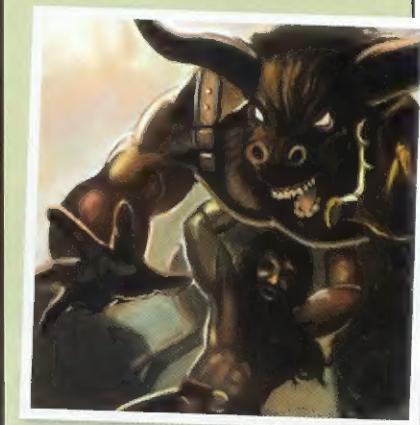


### 4 Exhibit your art

Get your work exhibited in real-world galleries, and bust a few myths along the way page 22

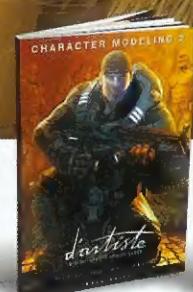
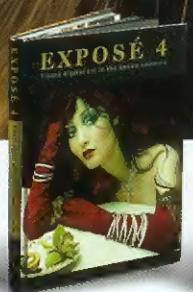
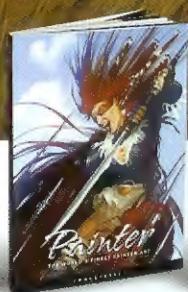
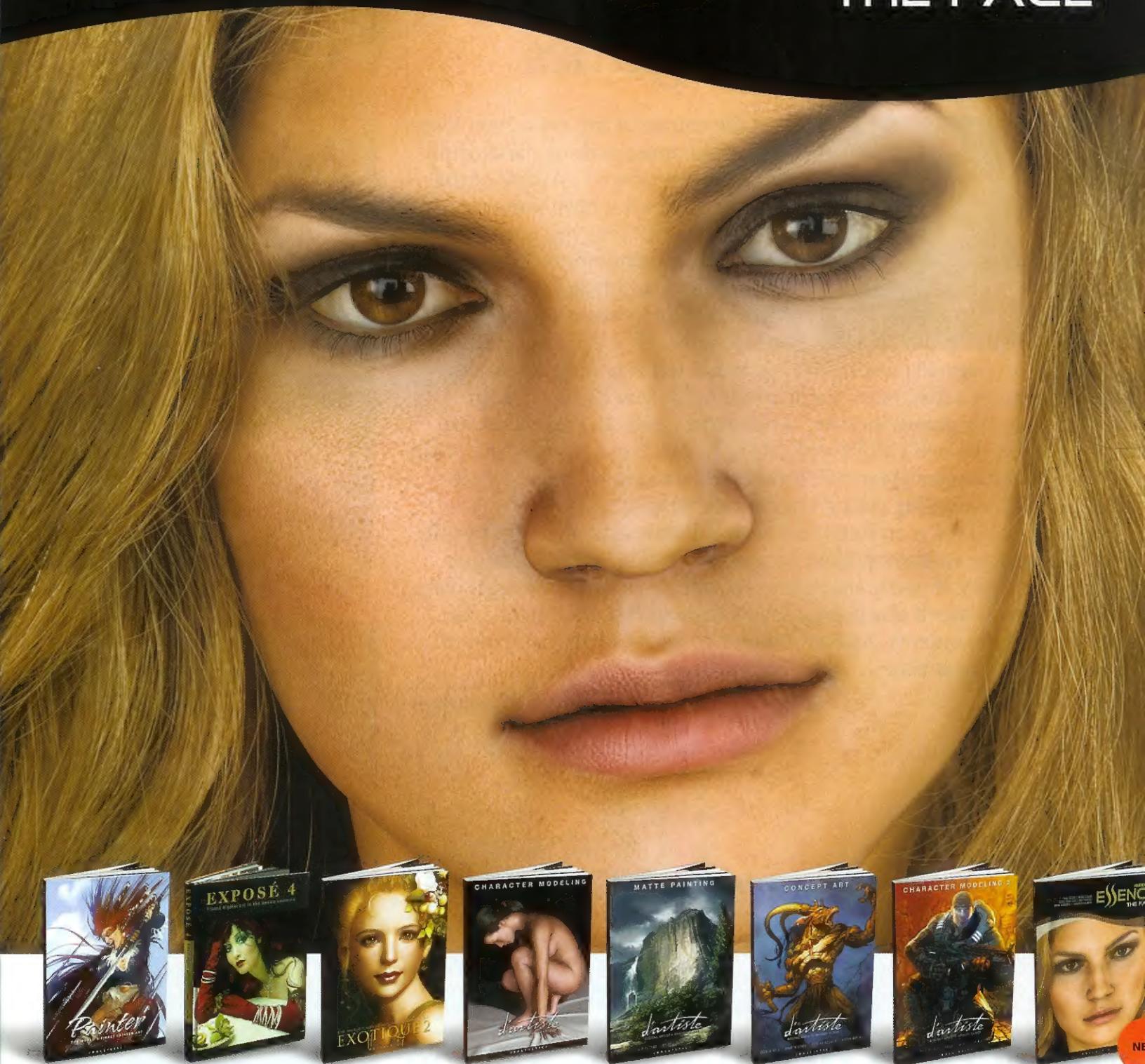
### 5 Art Surgery

Find out how reader Sam Grgis improved his composition skills with the help of an IFX artist page 44



PAUL FEDOR • PETER LEVIUS  
HONG SUCK SUH • MATT HARTLE  
MARK SNOSWELL • STEVEN STAHLBERG

# CREATIVE ESSENCE THE FACE



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SOCIETY OF DIGITAL ARTISTS



Issue 19 July 2007

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART  
**ImagineFX**

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Video game character concepts, Andrew Jones style

**TURN THE PAGE  
FOR MORE ►**

  
"For natural effects, switch brush sizes and opacity constantly" **Marta Dahlig (page 92)**

Image: Marta Dahlig

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You send in your art and we put it on these pages each month

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**“Don’t take your talent for granted”** JP Targete (page 56)

# Reader EXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX  
ARTIST  
MONTH

## Feng Xun

LOCATION: China

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showthread.php?t=91505](http://www.conceptart.org/forums/showthread.php?t=91505)

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SOFTWARE: Photoshop CS2



Currently working in the games and movie industry, Xun has a varied visual diet: "I love both Occidental and Chinese culture," he says.

"They move me so much."

It's clear from his work that Xun has a deep connection with his subjects but he makes the true nature of his depictions clear when he says that: "I love the feeling of suffering, loneliness, dread, mad pretension and malevolence..."

These sentiments, so Xun believes, "offer another way to show the aesthetic feeling, and it's this that I'm trying to catch with my work."

Xun learned stage design while at university and he uses his theatre skills to great effect in his fantasy images: "I like to light my pictures theatrically."

**1 DEITY** The drama of this piece is inescapable. "The inspiration," relates Xun, "came from Tibetan T'angka and Chinese carvings of great antiquity."

**2 DRAK DUKE** Even the undead have a hierarchy - Meet the Drak Duke.

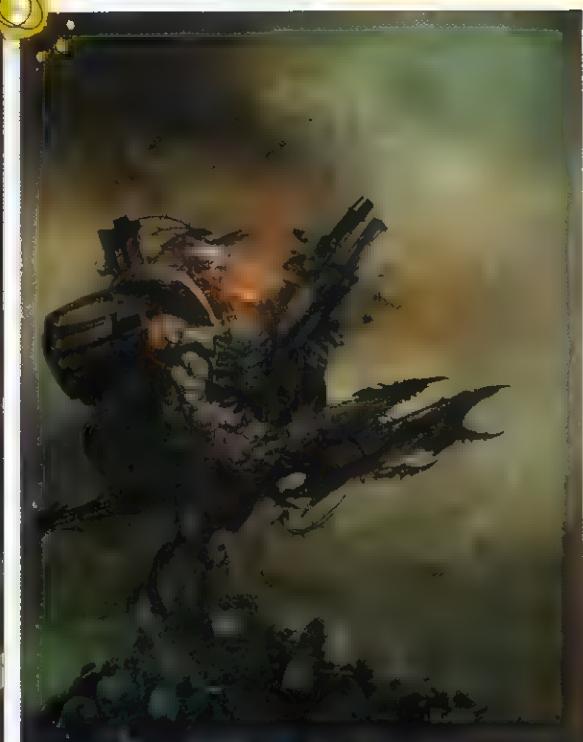
**3 DEMONS** A dream-inspired image, which, says Xun, was helped by music, which "makes me crazy..."



## ARTIST OF THE MONTH

Feng Xun wins a copy of *Exotique 2*, featuring the world's best character art, and *EXPosé 4*, showcasing the universe's finest digital artists. Find out more at: [www.ballisticpublishing.com](http://www.ballisticpublishing.com).





## Artist crit

Artist Henning Feng



"Combining conceptual, stylised brush work with beautiful organic shapes is not something any artist would manage, or even dare to mix. Feng has nailed this genre and it's impressive how consistent he is on where to focus his efforts on detailing."



**Ng Ling Tze**

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SOFTWARE: Photoshop



"I have always loved the company of cats," says Ling Tze, aka Tamaoww. "Maybe it is due to not being able to own one myself, but drawing cat-related themes is becoming quite an addiction."

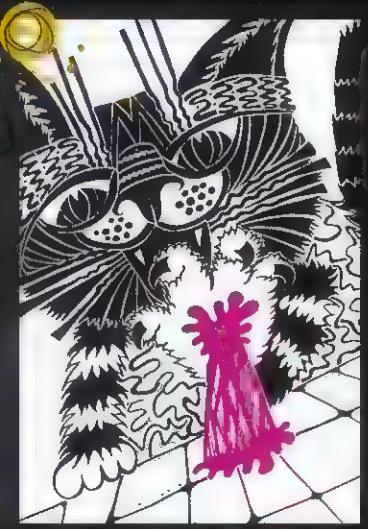
Previously Ling has used traditional media, but lately she has been introduced to Photoshop. "I have found it very useful and quick for experimenting with colours and layout, editing and being able to create more complex background montages."

Presently working as a freelancer, "Drawing cat-themed artworks for galleries and retail merchandise."

**1 DREAMING** Dreaming of BanBan, "The only cat that stayed with me for a short period of time."

**2 STICKY** Cookie, a playful kitten of a friend, "Who one day found himself in a sticky situation when he found out that bubble gum on the floor is not a toy," explains Ling.

**3 GOODBYE** "The day BanBan left was the most heart-aching time."





**Miguel Coimbra**

LOCATION: France

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SOFTWARE: Painter and Photoshop

 Born in December 1977, Miguel holds Portuguese and French nationality, and is currently living in Lyon. He was initially working in the IT field. "But I got bored pretty fast, so that in time I taught myself illustration and CG stuff."

This was a logical development for Miguel, who has always been passionate about games, fantasy and sci-fi. "I always dreamt of working in that industry and becoming one of the illustrators I admired so much."

Eventually, that's exactly what happened. "I've been working now in the entertainment industry for five years. First as a graphic designer, then as a concept artist for video games at Eden Games." Now he works as a freelance illustrator for role-playing games, books and trading cards.

 **JADEWIZARD** "As you can see, I almost use a different technique on each image," Miguel points out. "Experimenting is what I like the most in digital art."

 **ORCS** "Finished in Painter, the initial image here was black and white." Then Miguel shifted to Photoshop and started messing with layers and blending modes. "I added a few painting details later, and voila!"

 **SAMURAIS** "It's 100 per cent Photoshop," says Miguel. "I began with big shapes and started sculpting them by adding or removing forms; when the general form appeals to me I add detail."



**IFX INSIGHT**

 "Miguel's work is very dynamic, but sometimes it's the little details. Look at the sharp motes of light in Jadewizard, they work so well juxtaposed with the brush work." **Paul Tysall, Art Editor**





## Alexander Preuss

**LOCATION:** Germany  
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**SOFTWARE:** 3ds max, Photoshop, ZBrush



Alexander grew up in the small German town of Aachen, "where I spent most of my free time painting and making cartoons until I got my first computer."

The machine in question was an Amiga 2000 "and I had a lot of trouble convincing my parents that I need this machine for school, when in reality I used it just for playing games."

Alexander realised he wanted to pursue painting and concept design as a career and before long he got himself a job in the CG industry, as well as doing art work in his spare time.

**1 THE BROKEN ARMISTICE OVER BALAKIN** "This was my first big step into the CGI world," explains Alexander. "I entered the CGNetworks challenge entitled The Grand Space Opera in 2004. I was shocked to find my artwork was the grand prize winner."

**2 THE DARK TOWER** "This image was originally done for my wife, who owns almost every Stephen King book."

**3 FINISHING LINE** "I always wanted to do a great racing image," says Alexander. This took about 60 hours and featured in Exposé 4 and won the Animago Challenge 2006 in the category: Still/Professional.



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**Euan Mactavish**

LOCATION: Scotland  
WEB: <http://paper-pencil-pixels.blogspot.com>  
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SOFTWARE: Photoshop, Painter



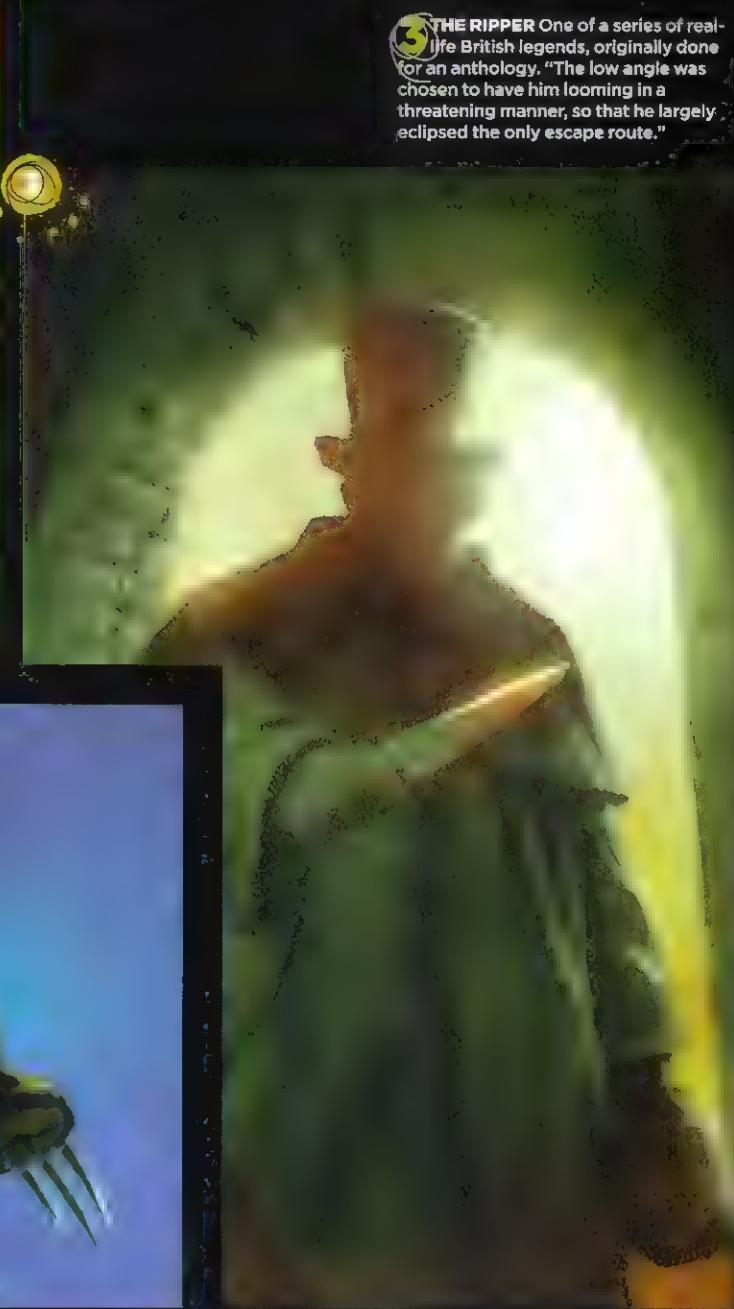
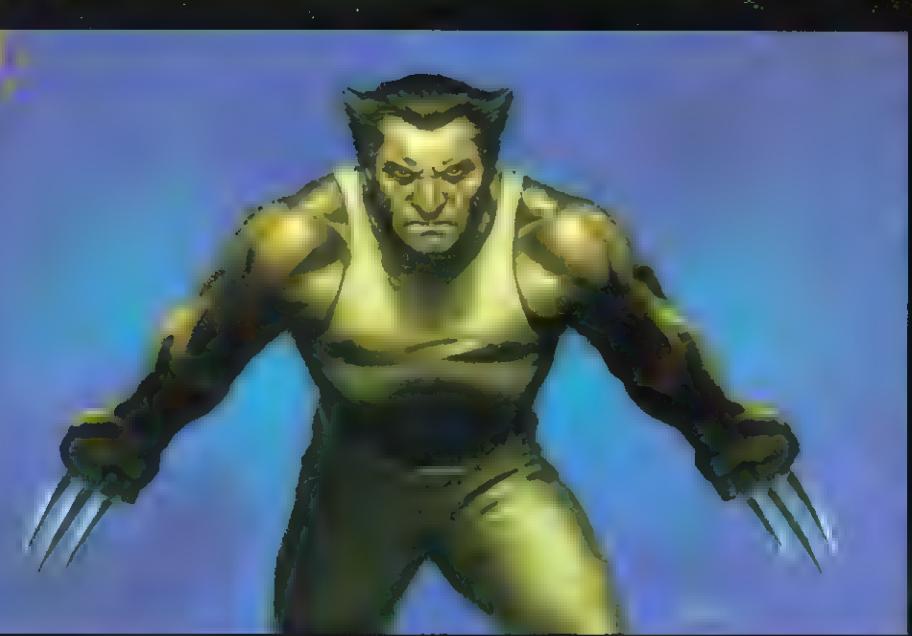
"Even though my paintings are entirely digital," says Euan, "my influences are mostly traditional."

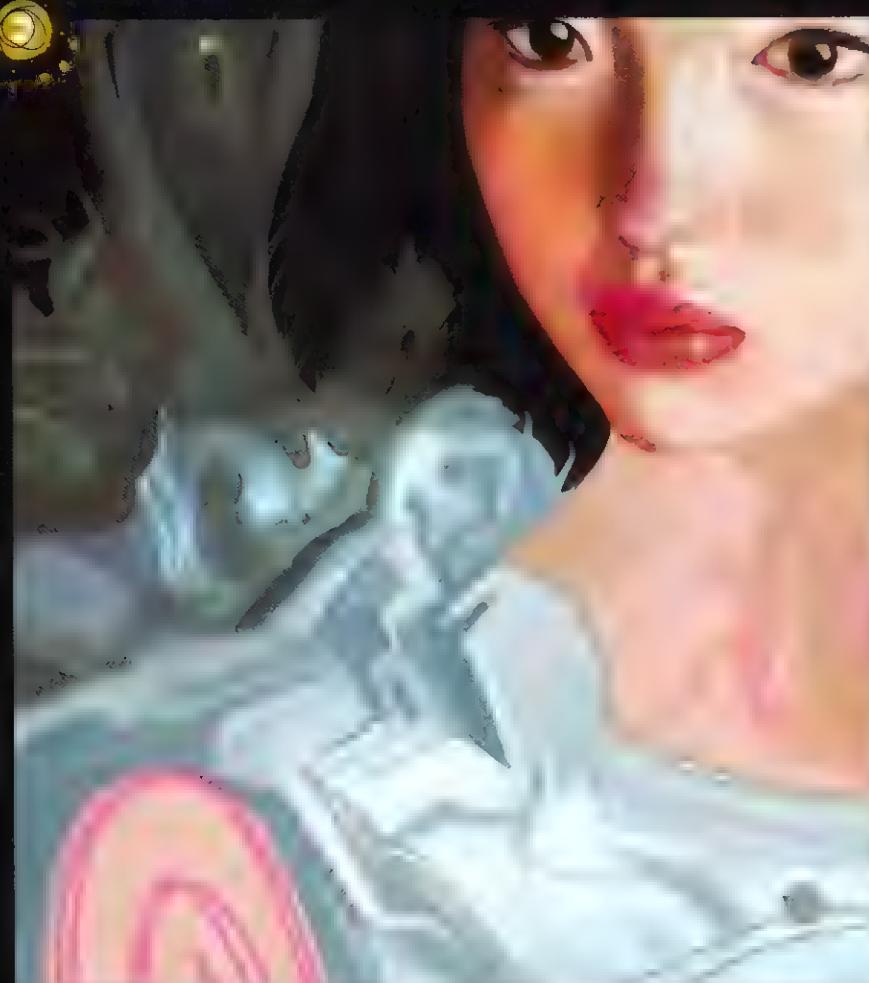
Euan spends his day making a living as a graphic designer, and by night as a part-time illustrator and comic book colourist/painter. It comes as no surprise to learn that he is also one of the moderators of online forum www.drawingboard.org, where he runs the section dedicated to superheroes and science fiction art.

**1 THE SCARLETT MURDERESS** A homage to the paperback crime novel covers of Robert McGinnis, Barye Phillips and their contemporaries, "I wanted to give it the appearance of a bashed and frayed book, so I added a few textures to give it an aged look."

**2 THE BEST THERE IS** "Wolverine is probably my favourite comic book character," says Euan. "He's definitely the one I draw the most. I never drew him in any of his costumes, preferring to depict him in his civvies."

**3 THE RIPPER** One of a series of real-life British legends, originally done for an anthology. "The low angle was chosen to have him looming in a threatening manner, so that he largely eclipsed the only escape route."





#### JFX INSIGHT

Jaxing shows a masterful skill of depicting monkey expressions in Monkeybot. This is obviously an object the simian has never chanced upon before."

Tom Rudderham,  
DVD Editor

#### Jaxing Rong

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SOFTWARE: Photoshop



"I enjoy watching cartoons just as much as I enjoy going to the Metropolitan Museum of Art," says Jaxing. He carries his enjoyment of variety into the themes of his work: "So my favourite illustrations depict characters doing everyday things set in extraordinary worlds."

Although Jaxing was originally interested in fine arts, "I found going from oil paints to Photoshop to be very easy. Eventually I grew out of trying to get my digital illustrations to mimic traditional media." Right now the goal is to explore the possibilities of Photoshop combined with packages such as Maya.

**1 MONKEYBOT** When a cyborg girl living in the jungle becomes part of it, this is what you get, "just a mix of man and nature and technology."

**2 ATIKO** Portrait of a princess. "Using traditional portraiture mixed with abstract shapes I wanted to flow throughout the image."

**3 BATTLEDOME2** "The ultimate attack dog" was inspired by the television show Battlebots.





### **Dimitrios Kounios**

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SOFTWARE: Maya 8, Photoshop CS2, ArtRage, ZBrush 2.5, After Effects



Dimitrios has always been interested in digital art, "Eventually I enrolled in Visual Arts at the University of Regina."

But while sculpture, painting and learning about art history was fun: "It simply wasn't satisfying my passion for fantasy concepts and animation." This problem resolved itself in 2005 when a multimedia Institute opened its doors nearby, "and changed my life forever."

Dimitrios received his certification in Multimedia Studies and 3D Animation and Game Design in just two years and is busy working towards a career in the video game and movie industries as a concept artist or 3D modeller.

"I would eventually like to develop my own movie script along with all of the corresponding concept artwork."

**1 UNDERWATER CREATURE** This piece started life monochromatic and abstract but, "eventually, after adding more detail I noticed it was starting to form into a squid-like creature."

**2 WARRIOR GIRL** Initially a practice study on female anatomy, which Dimitrios continued to add detail to.

**3 STONE EAGLE** "A simple Photoshop sketch done as a concept piece for a video game mod."



**Mitchell Nelson**

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**SOFTWARE:** Photoshop CS2



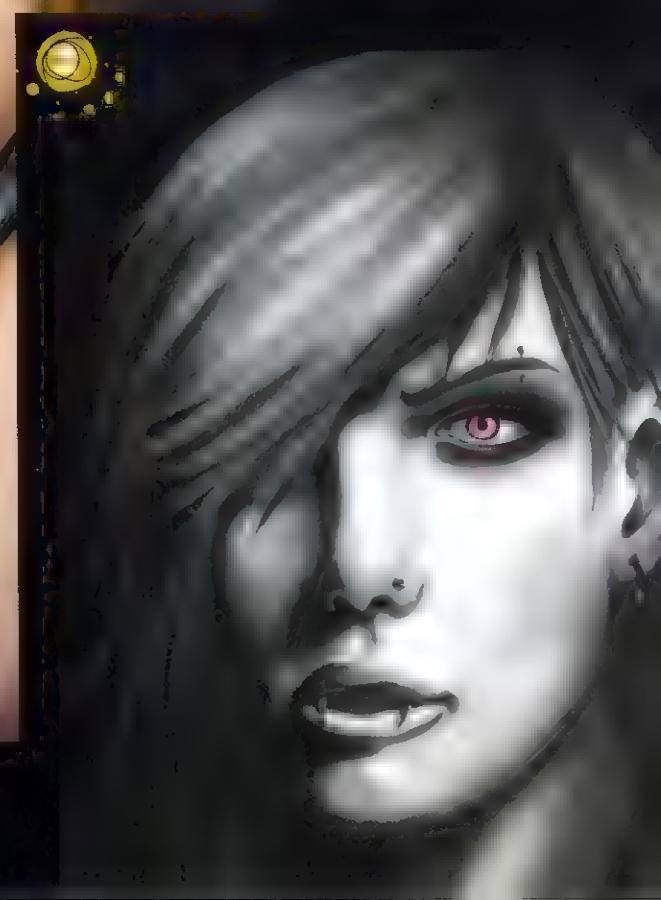
Mitchell Nelson is very lucky: "I am 16 years old and art is my life." Mitchell has already spent several years working on his artistic skills and is about to sit finals in GCSE Art and Graphic Design. But most excitingly, "I will be starting college very soon."

Mitchell only discovered digital art about seven months ago. "I first came across it when I was at my Godmother's party. I just happened to have my artwork with me trying to practise a bit of sketching when one of the guests came up to me and started to tell me about her nephew, Martin Bland ([www.spyroteknik.com](http://www.spyroteknik.com)), a digital artist."

"Ever since seeing his art I was totally inspired to start working digitally." So Mitchell got in contact with Martin "and he has given me excellent advice."

**1 GUNNER'S HEAVEN** Mitchell came up with the idea of doing this portrait when playing the online game GunZ The Duel. It was inspired by my character who wore the outfit Gunner's Heaven."

**2 IN THE SHADOWS** This portrait started off as an elf. "However, I felt this piece had a sinister bat-like feel so I turned it into a vampire."





### Johnnie Houston Estill II

LOCATION: US

WEB: <http://estill.cgsociety.org>

EMAIL: [johnnie.estill@digitaletenvi.com](mailto:johnnie.estill@digitaletenvi.com)

SOFTWARE: 3ds max, Maya, Photoshop, HDR Shop.

 Johnnie teaches the Video Game Art programme at the Art Institute of California in Orange County, the same school he graduated from in 2005.

Before returning to education, Johnnie worked in the games industry. "As a lighting and FX/environment/concept artist at Blizzard Entertainment on StarCraft Ghost." Add to that a stint at Shiny Entertainment on The Matrix: Path Of Neo and you're starting to get the idea.

Oddly, "I never had the intention of working in the video game industry and while in school. I was grooming myself towards working in motion pictures." In fact Johnnie has had some luck working on small independent films such as The Last Transmission (2003), Scribble (2005), and two Star Wars shorts.

 **1. THE HUN** Johnnie's happy with this one: "It reminds me of a postcard," he muses of his futuristic Hawaii. "It's my kind of place and look! They even serve Guinness!"

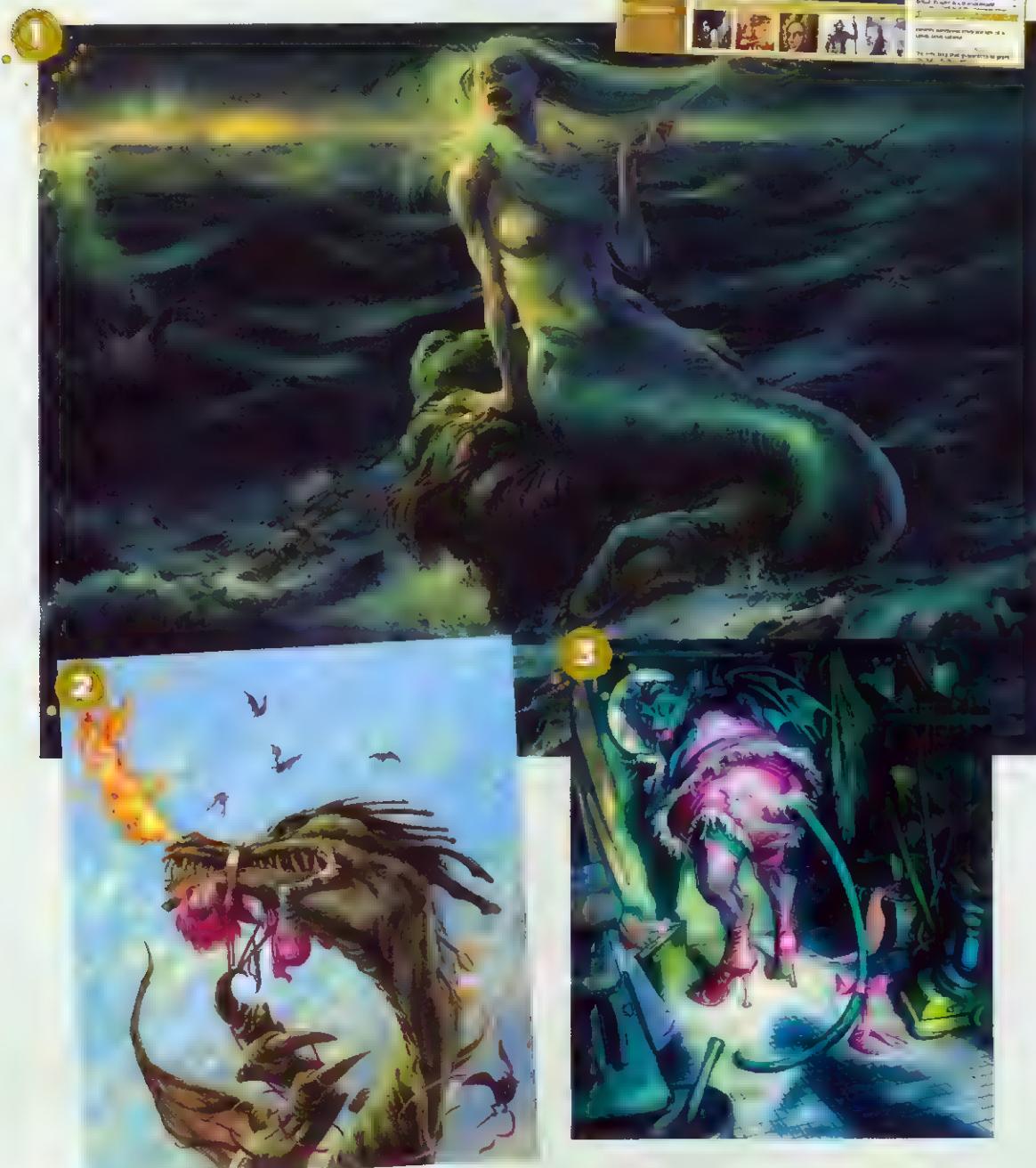
 **2. ASCENT** Using a mix of 3ds max and Photoshop, this is Johnnie's rendering of the moving 'into the light' vision that comes at the time of death. "I always liked that idea," he comments.

 **3. ALAMAR JUNGLES** "These ancient temples emit energy that kept the planet's sparse rings of jungle alive," Johnnie explains. "The jungles can't grow outside of the area in which the emitters can reach."



# Online FX Posé

Upload your portfolio to our website at [www.imaginefx.com](http://www.imaginefx.com) and you could see your work grace these very pages – just like this month's winning artists...



## 1 + Nick Harris

**LOCATION:** England  
**IFX USERNAME:** Nickillus  
**IFX PORTFOLIO:** [http://community.imaginefx.com/fxpose/nickilluss\\_portfolio/default.aspx](http://community.imaginefx.com/fxpose/nickilluss_portfolio/default.aspx)  
**EMAIL:** [virgil.pomfret@online.fr](mailto:virgil.pomfret@online.fr) (agent)  
**SOFTWARE:** Painter IX.5 & X, Photoshop 7



UK born and based illustrator and a regular on the ImagineFX forums, Nick didn't always want to be an artist. "Up until the age of 18 I was convinced that I wanted to be a doctor. My dislike of chemistry and physics eventually persuaded me that a different path would lead to a happier life and a Harrow illustration course got me instead."

An artist for children's books for 25 years, Nick has illustrated classics such as *The Wind in the Willows*, *King Arthur* and *Robin Hood*. "Watercolour and inkline had been my stock in trade up until around the year 2000. Realisation hit me that the times they were a' changing, and that digital was the way to go. I still think like a traditional artist though," says Nick. "I've heard some people say that a blank sheet of paper is frightening to them. To me it's more a portal to an infinite variety of images lurking within your subconscious."

## 2 SIRENSONG

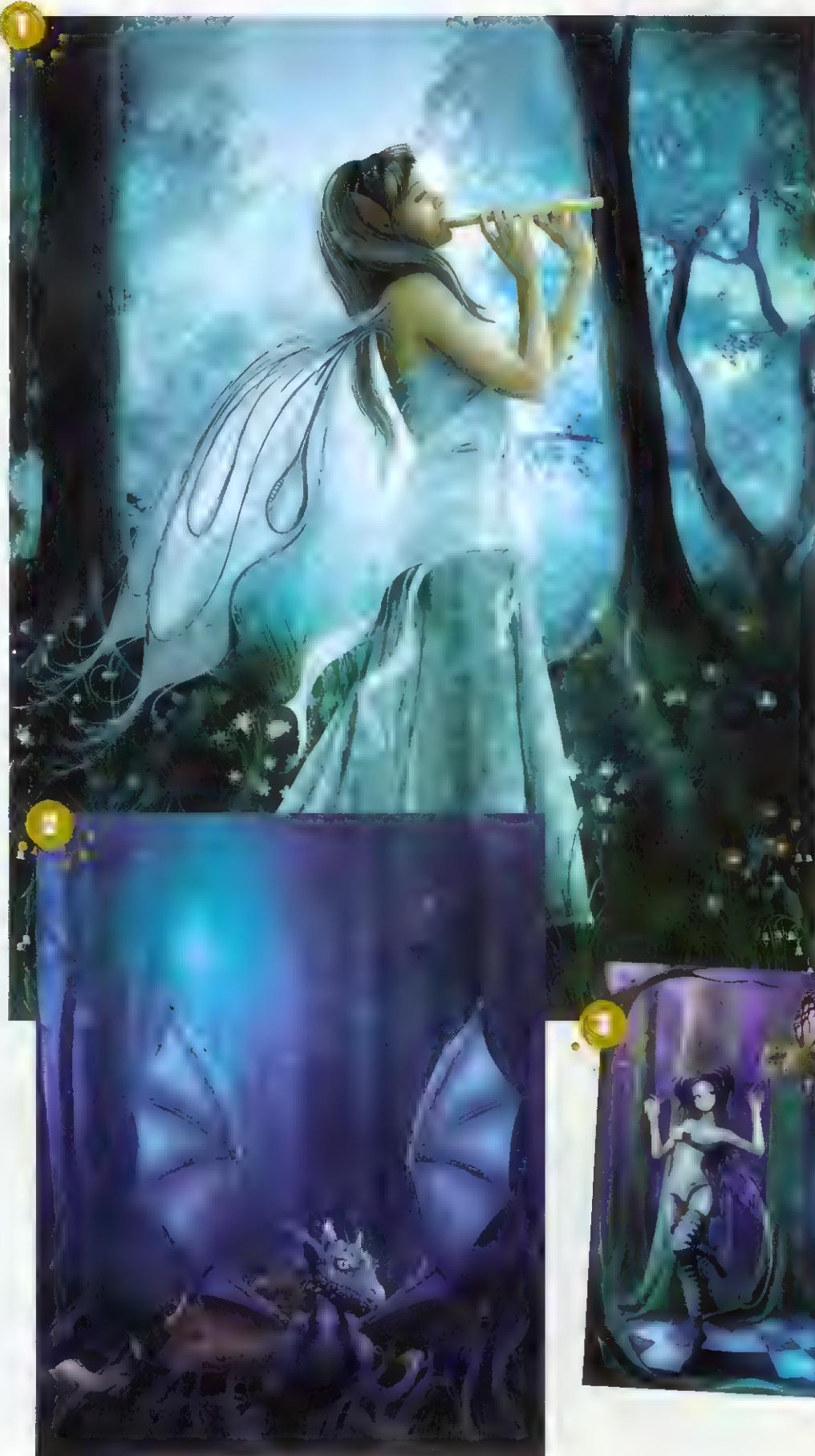
"Begun for a monthly ImagineFX challenge themed Mythical Creatures. Did I finish it in time? No," laughs Nick, before revealing his process: "Sketched in Sketchbook Pro, then taken into Painter IX.5 for the meat of it and Photoshop 7 for tinkering."

## 3 THE DRAGON WRANGLER

"Begun for the Manga competition on the ImagineFX site a few months back. Did I finish it in time? No." Can anyone spot a trend here? Painted in Painter IX.5, "Check out using the paper palette in combination with the large chalk brush variant, if you like the textural stuff on the dragon's neck. Those are the tools responsible for most of that," Nick explains.

## 4 HE'S OUT

Painted in Painter IX.5. "Actually finished in time for an IFX challenge themed The Monster in the Closet. I tend towards the daft in my thinking... hence the combination of ideas about something 'being in the closet'. I like to play with words and phrases. And no before you ask, that isn't one of my outfits. My Dad wouldn't let me borrow that one."



## Susan McKivergan

LOCATION: US

IFX USERNAME: cosmosue

IFX PORTFOLIO: [http://community.imaginefx.com/fxpose/cosmosues\\_portfolio/default.aspx](http://community.imaginefx.com/fxpose/cosmosues_portfolio/default.aspx)

EMAIL: [mjmckive@bellsouth.net](mailto:mjmckive@bellsouth.net)

SOFTWARE: Poser 6 and Photoshop



Residing in Columbia, US, Susan has always been drawing art on a personal level, but it wasn't until she was in her 20s that she became interested in art as a career. "I took two years of traditional art classes before putting my degree on hold to stay home with my kids," Susan reveals. "A few years later I discovered Photoshop and Poser – these opened my eyes to the digital artworld."

### FAIRY SONG

"This work is 99 per cent digital painting," Susan explains. "I use a lot of photos and 3D elements in my work but there is very little here. For the figure I used a stock photo for a reference and there is a small amount of paintover."

### THE HATCHLING

"This year I have decided to focus more on my love for dragons," says Susan. "I started this in Poser 6 and rendered out a low quality 3D figure for the dragon and shell. I opened them up in Photoshop and took it from there with my tablet, re-painting the figure."

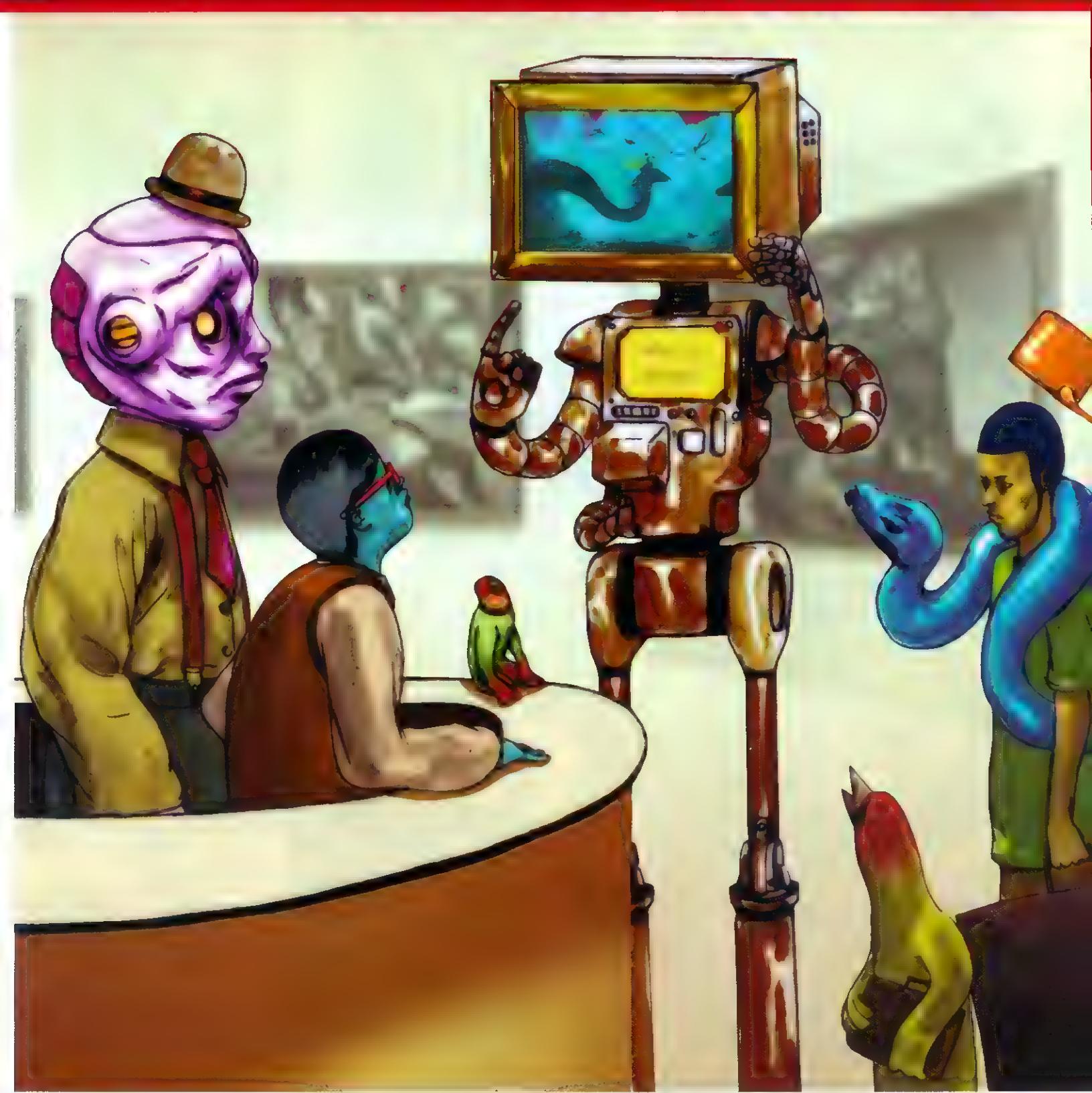
### THE WHIMSY CATS

Another image that began as a low quality render in Poser 6 for the figures. Susan explains further: "I used Aiko 3 and the Millennium Big Cat from DAZ as the bases of the render. My favourite part of this has to be the little ladybug in the corner."

ARTIST NEWS, SOFTWARE & EVENTS

# ImagineNation

AT THE CORE OF THE FANTASY ART COMMUNITY





## FATHER OF THE FORCE

Ralph McQuarrie's original concept art for Star Wars, Indiana Jones and other classic films is coming to a book store in a galaxy far, far away. **Page 26**



## Wii WINNER REVEALED

Way back in issue 10 we asked you to write us with your manager for the chance to win a Nintendo Wii. Reinold Torrealba, aka Reid, came top of the pile. **Page 27**



## OUT OF THIS WORLD

He brought Terry Pratchett's bizarre world to life with his imaginative art, now you can enjoy the late Josh Kirby's work at an exhibition. **Page 28**

# Exhibit your art

**Go on show** Meet the artists who are determined to exhibit their art in real-world galleries – and bust a few myths along the way...

**Bryan Beus** only began drawing seriously at the age of 21, and just three years later he is a successful freelance illustrator in both traditional and digital media. What's more, he has just celebrated his first exhibition at the BF Larson gallery in his native Utah, showcasing 30 pictures across a range of media.

As Bryan explains in the Industry Insight column (right), there's no real secret to getting your digital art exhibited – it just takes patience and persistence. "The bottom line is that if you need experience there's nothing better you can do than just start trying," he says. "I can almost guarantee you success if you don't give up."

He believes the stigma often attached to digital art – in the sense that it's not 'real' in some way – doesn't bother the general



Two pieces from Bryan's Jabberwocky series shown at his recent exhibition at the BF Larson gallery in his home state of Utah.

which point their opinion does a 180-degree turn."

As he points out, this may be because there's no 'original' to sell, everything is inherently a copy. Not that that seems to bother most potential buyers: "I've found that where I live people aren't so interested in having an original piece as they are in having something cool on the wall."

Artist Eric Scala has taken the matter of publicising digital art into his own hands with the launch of Sumus Vicinæ, a travelling ➤

**“I’ve had some unreasonable critics admire and praise my work until they find out it’s digital”**

public so long as you prepare the work properly.

"I recently started printing everything on Epson Premier Art Canvas, and most people can't tell the difference," he says. Some, however, take a snobbier view. "I've had some unreasonable critics admire and praise my work until they find out it's digital, at

## INDUSTRY INSIGHT

### BRYAN BEUS

Young artist Bryan Beus gives us his tips on getting your art exhibited

How can a digital artist work towards being exhibited, especially if they've never dealt with a gallery before? Just call them. Put together your best work and start trotting around. There are thousands and thousands of galleries and I guarantee that there's one interested in displaying your work. You can find galleries at which to ask by searching online for galleries in your area, visiting a local art museum, checking the phone book or just asking around among your art buddies.

**What other key advice would you give someone who wants to exhibit?**

Be willing to take risks, fail, get embarrassed and have painful experiences all in the name of learning. The most powerful and life-changing experiences I've had as an artist were usually hard to bear at the time, but turned out to be learning moments in the long run.

Two books that you might find useful are: *How to Profit from the Art Print Market* by Barney Davey (\$47, ISBN 9780976960706), and *The Artist's Marketing and Action Plan Workbook* by Jonathan Talbot and Geoffrey Howard (\$17, ISBN 9780970168139).



Bryan Beus, from Utah in the US, is a freelance illustrator in both digital and traditional media  
[www.beauxpaint.com](http://www.beauxpaint.com)

► Continued from previous page...

exhibition of CG illustrators from different countries

"Everybody knows the Spectrum annual in the US and Ballistic Publishing in Australia, but there was nothing in Europe," he says. The Latin name means 'We are neighbours': "It came from the title of a novel by Thomas Geha, which he sent to me to see if I was interested in making a comic book version."

Eric's recruiting method was simple: every time he discovered someone new in the CG art world, he would just ask them if they were interested. Among those who have already signed up are Sparth, Meats Meier and Rebecca Kimmel from the US, Skan Srisuwan from Thailand, Svetlin Velinov from Bulgaria, plus many others. It's a truly global panoply.

The UK's Paul Gerrard ([www.butterflysoldiers.com](http://www.butterflysoldiers.com)) was also an early proponent. "It's a fantastic idea," he says. "Growing up I craved for horror, fantasy, sci-fi art... no exhibitions from what I remember existed. Even now these genres can rarely be seen exhibited in any physical gallery."

Sumus Viciniae launches soon - keep an eye on [www.ericscala.com](http://www.ericscala.com) for more details. In the meantime, get out there and get exhibiting! Let us know how you get on at [www.imaginefx.com](http://www.imaginefx.com)



Woodwitch, a painting from Bryan's Mythical Women series. "Don't give up," is Bryan's advice for artists seeking to exhibit their work

## Oh Miki you're so fine

**Free content** Another great Poser figure for you

Thanks to the kind people at eFrontier and Content Paradise we're bringing you yet more fantastic content this month in the form of Miki 1.0.

Miki is quickly becoming the most popular 3D female character in the Poser world, which is no surprise, given

her immaculate detail and range of hair and accessories.

Miki is a high-res character with 37 face morphs (smiles, frowns and so on), nine hair styles and 11 pieces of clothing. As a bonus we're including an extra clothing pack containing schoolgirl, retro sci-fi, rockabilly and casual outfits - a package that would normally cost you \$76 but is free on the DVD!



### Upgrade Offer

Upgrade to the Miki 2.0 Complete Figure Bundle for just \$10 - normal price is \$50. Just visit [www.contentparadise.com/miki2ifx](http://www.contentparadise.com/miki2ifx) and enter the code Miki2ifx by 31 August.

## Pherone

**Comic strip** It's dark, deadly and digital

Most comic artists still do some work using traditional media. For Viktor Kalvachev and his new strip Pherone, however, it's digital all the way.

Viktor is senior art director at Foundation 9 Entertainment, chiefly a game development company but which also produces strips such as Pherone

He says 95 per cent of the comic is produced in Painter, with some touch-ups added in Photoshop. Check out Victor's website at [www.kalvachev.com](http://www.kalvachev.com) for some samples



Pherone is the story of a seductive killer with a dark past. The strip is currently being published by Heavy Metal magazine.



Victor admits that although Pherone is completely digital, he still loves drawing on paper. "Computers give you volume and speed, not skills and talent!"



## Life is Humiliation

by Matt Boyce

### timmy the snail of time



© Matt Boyce 2007

5 minutes into the future, or 10 minutes into the past!

[www.mattboyce.com](http://www.mattboyce.com)

## In short...

The latest news in brief for digital artists

### Plug-ins Strata 3D

If you've invested in Photoshop CS3 Extended, check out Strata's 3D modelling plug-ins. Design 3D, Foto 3D and Live 3D enable you to create and render 3D models in a variety of ways, including generating them from an existing photo. They cost \$149 each.

[www.strata.com](http://www.strata.com)

### Website MyToons

A new and growing community site for all things animated. You can upload, view and share your own animations (in any style or medium), check out the latest offerings from both amateurs and pros, and discuss the finer points of onion skinning with fellow toonheads. What's more, it's all free.



[www.mytoons.com](http://www.mytoons.com)

### Software Poser 7 Content Exporter

Also jumping on the CS3 3D bandwagon is e frontier with the release of a free export module for Poser 7. It turns models into .obj files that can be moved, scaled and lit in CS3. Sixteen free models are also included.

[www.e-frontier.com](http://www.e-frontier.com)

### Comic Lee Carter does 2000 AD

Remember Art-Venture drawn by Lee Carter on the back page of ImagineFX? Lee's illustrated a story for 2000 AD Prog 1539 called Bad Blood. "It's a terror tale, involving vampires, hookers and the seedy streets of Soho. It's done in the same style as Art-Venture but a bit darker and raunchy," says Lee. Find out more at [www.2000adonline.com](http://www.2000adonline.com)

## Chronicling life on Erth

Online novel Artist's collaborative fantasy world begins to take shape

**The Erth Chronicles is more than just a collaborative online fantasy world; it's also an extension of Richard Johnson's first novel.**

Richard is an illustrator who has long been fascinated with fantasy worlds, which culminated in his novel *The Enemy's Son*. The Erth Chronicles was created to support the writing, but he also hopes it will become a showcase for artists and writers who want to continue the story.



Richard is keen to get talent on board. "Erth Chronicles was never set up to exclusively showcase my own artwork," he says. "It is just as much about supporting my contemporaries' talents. I hope they will receive appreciation and support through my site."

Anyone interested will receive a full guide to the story, branding ideas, feedback and pride of place on the gallery.

See more at [erthchronicles.com](http://erthchronicles.com).



1 Month in issue 14, has contributed to the site



## IT'S ONLY A GAME

*A job in the games industry may not be as glamourous as you imagine*

By Cyril Van Der Haegen



Working on video games, such as Asheron's Call 2, was my main job for almost a decade. A lot of artists are desperate to get into the games industry with a false sense of expectation, because they don't realise what it's really all about. I wrote an insider view on the games industry in 2003 and it's just as valid today.

### To summarise my findings:

- a) Despite indications to the contrary, it's not a stable industry.
- b) You will not become a millionaire.
- c) It is just a job: it can be fun like any other, but it can also be frustrating.
- d) You will not own the work you did.

### Retrospectively, I can also add:

- e) It is a young, sometimes juvenile, industry. That's fine when you're just out of college, but you can begin to feel old rather quickly.
- f) There can be as much politics as in any other office. And the more politics, the worse the end product will be. I've experienced that myself, and it's devastating for the crew, the product and the entire company.

Though this summary may sound grim, the games industry can be a great place to work. The reason I raise those points is simply because they are generally not advertised or talked about much outside. Please understand that they aren't necessarily part of every company, but they can be part of some. If you're lucky and none of these points come up, you've got your dream job. If they're all present, you might want to rethink your strategy...



*Do you agree with Cyril? Log on to our forum at [www.imaginefx.com](http://www.imaginefx.com) and let us know.*

[www.tegehel.org](http://www.tegehel.org)

## The Art of Star Wars

**New book** A box of delights from the father of Star Wars art...

After a long wait, the definitive book for fans of Star Wars artwork has arrived. *The Art of Ralph McQuarrie* is a sumptuous, 400-page volume, which celebrates the man who defined the look of the Star Wars universe perhaps more than anyone else.

Ralph's concept paintings, designs and sketches for the original three films had a huge impact on their success. The book features more than 1,000 images, including some never-before-seen pieces, such as the thumbnail sketches he created the day he received the script - the first Star Wars art ever.

In addition, there are images created for the original Battlestar Galactica, ET, Raiders of the Lost Ark, Star Trek IV and many other classic sci-fi films, along with poster, book and matte art. Edited by John Scoleri, the book was developed in conjunction with Ralph himself, with the emphasis on quality. "I cannot



*The Art of Ralph McQuarrie* includes history in the making: a series of fascinating sketches he made on the very first day he read the script for Star Wars.

think of a more impressive end to my career than this book. It's fabulous - it's beyond my wildest imagination," he says

*The Art of Ralph McQuarrie* is limited to a print run of 2,000 copies in three different editions: a trade edition for \$125, a signed deluxe version for \$300, and a boxed version at \$750 (now sold out). The book's ISBN number is 0979158001. See [www.dreamsandvisionspress.com](http://www.dreamsandvisionspress.com) for full details

## Fantasy talk Explaining the inexplicable

**"When I look back at it now it's horrifying. I can't believe I did that type of work because my present work is so far from that right now."**

*What work did J.P. Targat do in the past that embarrasses him so much? p56*

## Call for entries

**Get published** Join the world's best character artists

Ballistic Publishing is inviting artists to submit digital character art for **Exotique 3: The World's Most Beautiful CG Characters**. Previous artists to have had their work showcased include Linda Bergkvist, Anry Nemo and Melanie Delon.

Daniel Wade, Managing Editor of Ballistic Publishing says: "We're looking for beautiful characters of any kind. Nudity is acceptable, but should



Enter your character creation to Exotique 3 for the chance to be showcased alongside respected talent from the industry.

be presented artistically and respectfully. We will also single out a small group of artists to feature their character-creation techniques."

There is no limit to the number of entries you can submit, and featured artists receive a free copy of the book. The deadline for submissions is 9 July. Full details can be found at [www.ballisticpublishing.com](http://www.ballisticpublishing.com)

# FREE!

# Vue 6

*A New Dawn*

Personal Learning Edition

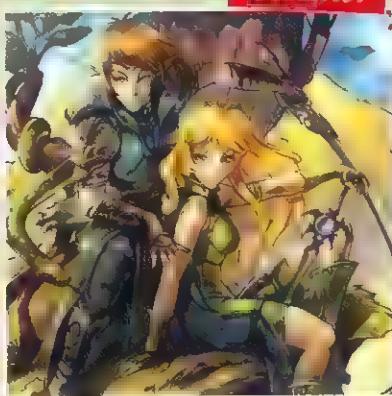
## Manga competition winner

Wii won And the winner of the Nintendo Wii is...

You may remember that back in issue 15 we ran a fantastic manga art competition, in conjunction with Manga Entertainment, in which the lucky winner would bag a Nintendo Wii and a copy of *Noein Volume One* on DVD.

Now we're pleased to announce the winner: Reina do Torrealba, aka Reiq, a Venezuelan artist and graphic designer currently living in Bournemouth. "To be honest I didn't expect to win the contest, especially after I saw the quality of the pieces submitted," he says. "My artwork was inspired by the brotherhood and relationship of the characters I presented. I wanted to make an image that shows each character's personality."

As well as the Wii and DVD Reiq receives a year's subscription to *ImagineFX*. Ten more runners-up each receive a *Noein* DVD of their own. You can see the complete list of winners on the *ImagineFX* website at [www.imaginefx.com](http://www.imaginefx.com). And check out Reiq's other fine work at [www.reiq.ws](http://www.reiq.ws)



Reiq's winning piece was themed on the strong brotherhood that existed between the characters he painted.



The quality of entries to this competition was exceptionally strong, and among the lucky runners up were Sip, above; OniYon, below, and Pinkimoon, below left. All ten runners up will receive a copy of the *Noein* DVD. See the *ImagineFX* forum for details of future competitions.



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Software

Solutions  
Natural 3D Environment

# Out of this world

Kirby exhibition Celebrating a seminal British sci-fi artist



If you've never discovered the work of Josh Kirby, now is a perfect time to do it, as an exhibition of the sci-fi artist's work opens in Liverpool.

Out of This World celebrates the Liverpudlian's entire artistic career, from the early days illustrating the likes of Authentic Science Fiction Magazine in the 1950s right up to his death in 2001.

Kirby's detailed panoramas graced the covers of books by Ray Bradbury and Edgar Rice Burroughs among



A Terry Pratchett novel would be almost unrecognisable without one of Josh Kirby's illustrations adorning the cover

many others, and his illustrations for Terry Pratchett's novels are perhaps his most famous. He also created the original poster image for Return of the Jedi, as well as producing many personal works inspired by his own art heroes, Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel.

"Josh Kirby possessed one of the most creative visual imaginations to come out of Liverpool in the 20th century," says the exhibition's curator, Ann Bukantas. "His exceptional skills in figure drawing, perspective, composition and the rich use of colour – and a wicked sense of humour – are always to the fore."

Out of This World provides a rare chance to see the original paintings uncropped. It runs from 15 June to 30 September at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool, and admission is free. See [www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/walker](http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/walker) for more information

You can't fail to recognise Josh Kirby's seminal illustrations for Return of the Jedi; imagery that captures the very essence of the film

**Buster Sword**  
From Final Fantasy VII  
Cloud Strife's sword in FFVII takes IFX's trophy because of its legendary status in cosplay. Its real-world version can measure up to 52 inches in length and weighs a hefty 18lbs. Hey, it's not all about guns, you know.

**Lancer Assault Rifle**  
From Gears of War  
The most satisfying weapon to grace a game ever, we're surprised it took so long for a developer to attach a chainsaw to a gun. Chopping your foe into pieces never gets boring. Makes a mess of the carpet though...

**Railgun**  
From Quake III and IV  
A popular choice in LAN parties, practised fraggers can be unstoppable once they've got hold of this. Mastering the one-hit kill that the Railgun brings enables you to become the champion of the arena.

# FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART ImagineFX special subscription offer

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"ImagineFX is the best published source of conceptual art information I have ever seen. It is a must-have investment for any aspiring concept artist that wants to take their skills to the next level." **Andrew Jones,** Concept Artist, Massive Black Inc



"ImagineFX is a unique resource for the science-fiction and fantasy community. It has invaluable tips and techniques for a range of software, and encourages aspiring artists to get their work in print and receive international exposure." **Jonny Duddle,** freelance artist

# ImagineNation Events

# Events

## FANTASY & SCI-FI ART SHOWS AROUND THE WORLD

### ANIME MID-ATLANTIC

DATE: 15-17 June

URL: [www.animemidatlantic.com](http://www.animemidatlantic.com)

Anime Mid-Atlantic is an annual Japanese animation convention held at the Greater Richmond Convention Center in Virginia. Jordan and Emily DeJesus from Studio Capsule are back, plus plenty of other stars from the manga world.

### DWESTCON

DATE: 15-17 June

URL: [www.city.org/midwestcon](http://www.city.org/midwestcon)

"No boring panels and no long-winded speakers," at the original sci-fi relaxacon. What you will find is informal chatting and getting to know each other – and yes, there is an art show. At the Cincinnati/Sharonville Doubletree in Ohio.

### WESTERCON

DATE: 30 June - 3 July

URL: [www.westercon60.org](http://www.westercon60.org)

This is subtitled 'Homeward Bound' so don't expect a serious examination of heavy sci-fi at this convention. Amazingly enough it's been going since 1948. Guest of honour at the San Mateo Marriott, California, is Theresa Mather.

### METROCON

DATE: 6-8 July

URL: [www.metroconventions.com/control.cfm](http://www.metroconventions.com/control.cfm)  
Florida's largest anime convention, featuring all the usual voice-over artists, the usual cosplayers, hard hitting in their day jobs around guest appearances... and more! Interestingly, artist Ashley Clark, Tampa Convention Center, Florida.

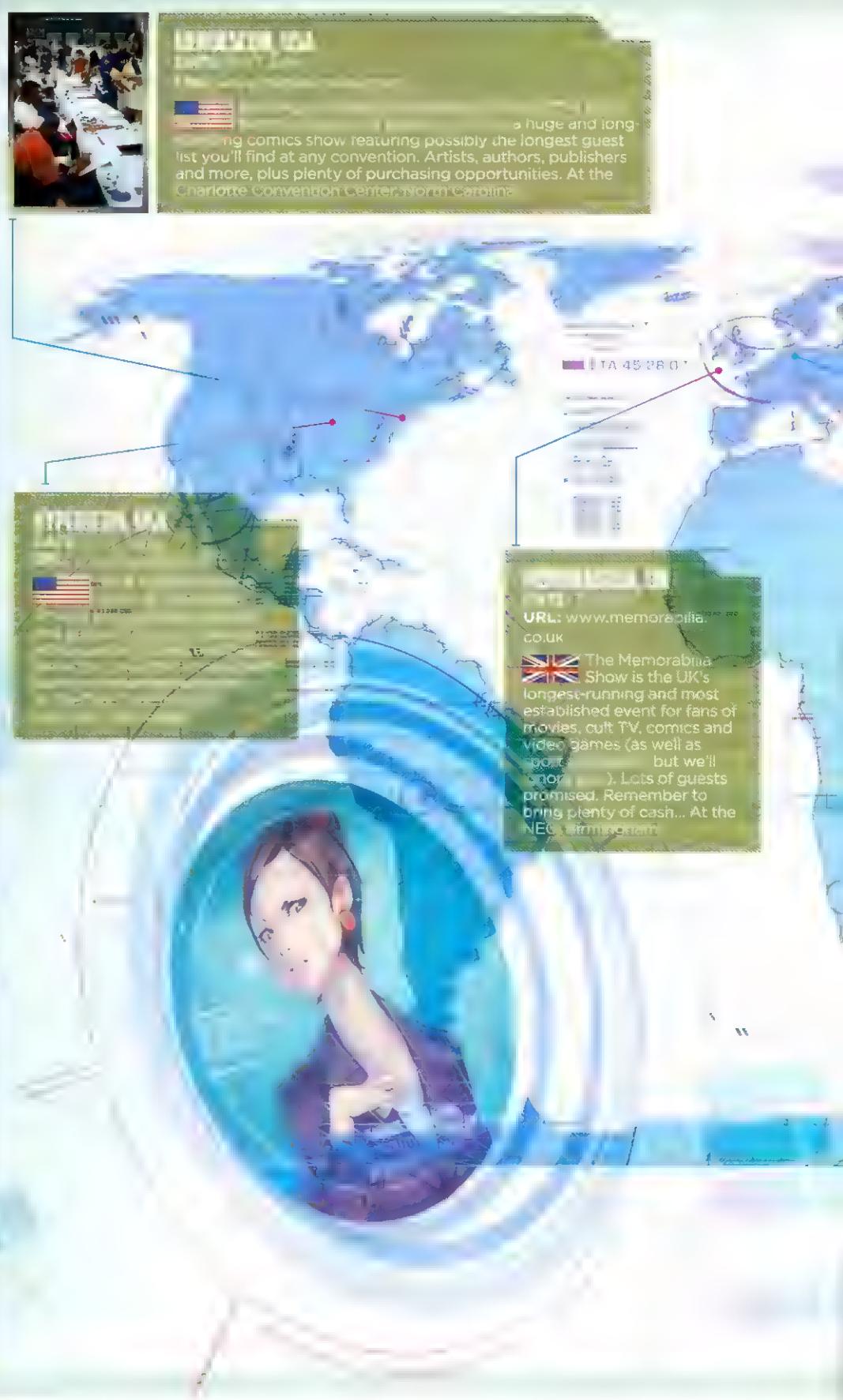
### INCONJUNCTION

DATE: 6-8 July

URL: [www.inconjunction.org](http://www.inconjunction.org)

More 'con' wordplay at this fantasy and sci-fi show. Say hello to shiny rock, the art of the year, or honour, as well as various topos from the world of comics, art and fiction. Then hit the art show at the Sheraton Indianapolis Hotel, Indiana.

**IF YOU KNOW OF ANY FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND YOU THINK THEY SHOULD BE FEATURED HERE, PLEASE SEND US THE DETAILS. EMAIL THEM TO THE EDITOR AT [EVENTS@IMAGINEFX.COM](mailto:EVENTS@IMAGINEFX.COM)**



# The fantasy art world calendar...



© Photograph: Philip Looney

## Last year I went to...

### HEROESCON

#### PHILIP LOONEY ON CHECKING IN AT THE MUCH-LOVED COMIC CONVENTION

HeroesCon in North Carolina is not only one of the best comic cons in the south-east US, but one of the best cons in the nation. Each year, hundreds of fans get a chance to rub shoulders with their favourite creators in a much more intimate setting than other larger cons. No doubt part of it is due to the southern charm of the city of Charlotte, but a large factor is because of organiser Shelton Drum and his staff who make sure that everyone has a good time.

HeroesCon 2006 featured a number of top-level pros, such as Bryan Hitch, Erik Larsen, Jim Mahfood, Art Adams, Marv Wolfman and Roy Thomas. One of the featured guests was the actress Rosario Dawson, who was there to promote her new comic *Occult Crimes Taskforce*. Another was Warren Ellis, who spent time signing books and speaking to his fans, including a three-hour question-and-answer session in which he talked about anything and everything from comics to movies to life and beyond.

HeroesCon 2006 had a strong presence from the 'Big Two', with both Dan DiDio and Joe Quesada attending – editors-in-chief of DC Comics and Marvel Comics respectively. Both men hosted panels outlining the future of their companies' line of publications.

Despite the name, HeroesCon is an extremely indie-friendly con, with a number of indie artists in attendance, as well as a four-part series of panels called 'How to break into indie comics.' In addition to the guests and panels the show also had a large amount of dealers, with excellent bargains on back issues, new comics and graphic novels.

If you love comics, art and meeting your favourite pros in a more intimate setting than larger conventions, then HeroesCon is definitely for you.

Philip Looney's comic blog *Poptown*<sup>1</sup> is at [poptown.blogspot.com](http://poptown.blogspot.com), and he is currently writing a forthcoming story for *Flashback Universe* com. [poptown.blogspot.com](http://poptown.blogspot.com)

# Letters

## YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact the editor, Rob Carney, on [rob@imaginefx.com](mailto:rob@imaginefx.com) or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK



### Four cover praise

Today I walked into WH Smith and was completely overwhelmed with the cover art on display (special limited edition four cover issue 18). I personally made a beeline for the Melanie Delon piece, she is such a gifted, special artist.

Now I know for every letter of praise you get on multi choice covers you'll

Our fantastic four covers from special limited edition issue 18.

### FROM THE FORUM AT [www.imaginefx.com](http://www.imaginefx.com)

#### This month's forum topic: Bristol Expo Adventures

It was a rainy day, I met most of the IFX team, was very exhausted and about to go home, when suddenly, I was knocked down from behind from a guy with a shovel and the other tying my hand... guess who? MARK and NICK!

Jeff MD

Haha! Good to see you and Nick today Jeff!

mark-jephcott

Oh well, wish I could have been there but Bristol is a gazillion miles away (rough estimate). Maybe if I Photoshop myself into the pics...

Banjaxedmutt

Darn you all and your living over there. \*sadness\* ;( Stupid ocean... I would have loved to have been there. Looks like it was fun.

Maha



John Kearney's cover art on issue 8 tempted Paul to read ImagineFX.

**DID YOU MISS ISSUE 18?** See page 95 for details on how you can get your hands on a copy.  
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probably get ten insisting this was all a ploy to sell more issues and how they felt cheated into buying all four covers, yawn, yawn, yawn. Don't listen to them, personally I love the choice and truly hope to see more. Well done, each issue continues to be a work of art.

*David Edwards, via email*

**Rob replies:** Hi David, and thanks for your email. I agree with you about Melanie, and reckon that all four artists did an amazing job. I invite everyone to tell me what they think of these special four cover editions. My favourite issue 18 cover? Well, it changes every day...

### Special editions?

Have you ever thought about doing ImagineFX special editions?

*M Garrido-Gutierrez, via email*

**Rob replies:** Yep, look out for Volume One on the newsstand and [myfavouritemagazines.co.uk](http://myfavouritemagazines.co.uk) very soon (more details coming next month).

### Life-changing moment

It's amazing how much of an effect a single moment can have on the rest of your life. It was when I spotted your eighth issue on the shelf of my local newsagent that I became instantly addicted to digital painting, and I've never looked back.

I've always had an interest in traditional artwork, graphic design and computer arts but it was when I discovered IFX that waves were made. John Kearney's amazing cover art was glowing on the shelf and as I thumbed through the magazine, dribbling over these stunning paintings, I was hooked.

Every day is dedicated to bettering both my traditional and digital abilities, and I'm loving every step of the way. In a nutshell, thank you IFX!

*Paul Winslow, via email*

**Rob replies:** Thanks for writing in, Paul. John Kearney was thrilled when I passed this email on to him (though you wouldn't know it from his photo), as was the rest of the IFX team. Good luck with your art – and don't forget to send us samples (that goes for everyone) to [fxpose@imaginefx.com](mailto:fxpose@imaginefx.com) or on CD/DVD to FXPosé, ImagineFX, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK.



The Star Letter winner gets one year's subscription to ImagineFX  
[www.imaginefx.com](http://www.imaginefx.com)

### A tale from Johannesburg

Your magazine changed my life completely. Last year I wasn't much of an anybody when it came to the art industry – sometimes I would pawn my work at the local flea market and sometimes I got the occasional storyboard job.

One day I walked into my newsagent, saw ImagineFX lying on the shelf and naturally the amazing cover art attracted me. The beautiful artwork inspired me to take my character art to a new level. So I sold my soul and managed to pick up a graphics tablet and ever since then my skills have increased immensely thanks to all the awesome workshops that you publish. Now I'm a first year multimedia student at the university of Johannesburg and the skills I learned from your publication have made me the top of my computer class, and when my class mates asked how I became so good I always tell them to pick up ImagineFX.

It is my only regret that we in South Africa receive our edition a whole two months after it's released in the UK.

*Joel, via email*



**Rob replies:** Thanks for sharing your story, Joel. It's always great to hear from our overseas readers. Have a free 12 month subscription.

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# Artist Q&A

GRADE  
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## The FANTASY & SCIENCE-FICTION DIGITAL ART ImagineFX panel

SEND US YOUR QUESTIONS:  
SEE PAGE 45 FOR DETAILS

### Philip Straub



Philip is art director for video games company NCSoft. He's an expert on colour theory, and an ImagineFX regular.

[www.philipstraub.com](http://www.philipstraub.com)

### Glen Angus



Glen is a senior artist at Ravensoft/Activision. He has been a concept illustrator for 13 years.

[www.gangus.net](http://www.gangus.net)

### Gary Tonge



Gary is concept art director at Swordfish Studios/Vivendi and also creates concept art on a freelance basis.

[www.visionafar.com](http://www.visionafar.com)

### Daryl Mandryk



Daryl is senior concept artist for Propaganda Games. Prior to that, he spent more than three years at Electronic Arts.

[www.mandrykart.com](http://www.mandrykart.com)

### Andy Park



Andy is a concept artist who works for Sony. Among the games he has worked on is God of War 2 for PlayStation 2.

[www.andyparkart.com](http://www.andyparkart.com)

### Daniel Dociu



Transylvanian-born Daniel now lives in the US and has been art director at ArenaNet for the past four years.

[www.arenanet.com](http://www.arenanet.com)

### Aly Fell



Aly Fell is a concept artist for Eurocom Software. He has created some stunning pin-up images, including an IFX cover.

[www.darkrising.net](http://www.darkrising.net)

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The industrial design – the craft's function – must work with the image's overall mood, and the two can be worked on hand in hand.

### Question

What is the typical process designing a vehicle for a sci-fi game?

Keith Rogers, England

### Answer

Phil replies

I'd say there probably isn't a typical approach for designing a vehicle for a science fiction game, since I've seen it tackled a number of different ways. Usually I like to approach this type of assignment with a two prong attack, focusing on both the overall mood and attitude of the vehicle along with the industrial design and form and function. In many cases creating the isometrics

(typically the front, side and back views) can be handled simultaneously with the mood piece.

To keep things simple for this question, I'll focus on the mood piece. Since I want to generate the concept quickly to recreate the workflow most concept artists experience on the job, I'll be applying my speed painting technique. The goal will be to create a consistent design that melds with the environment as quickly as possible.

I also start to think about the design by thinking of the ship 'in the round' as the saying goes. This is industrial design terminology for thinking about the object in three-dimensional terms; but it's still valid in fantasy artwork. I like to try to imagine walking around the object, as if I'm actually physically there, surveying the overall design from all angles. The more you practise this technique, the more depth your paintings will have.

Full-size  
Q&A images  
are on your  
DVD

## Step-by-step: From simple shapes to fully furnished spaceship



**Question**  
I usually start with very simple shapes, trying to find the overall look and design of the vehicle without going into any amount of detail. Using large brushes and keeping the image at thumbnail size, I rough in the basic background and colour palette.

**Answer**  
As I begin to finesse the overall shape, I decide to go with an organic design that has a silhouette that resembles a bird or winged creature. With overall design working pretty well, it's time to begin detailing the ship further.

**Answer**  
Let's create some additional visual interest. With this design I've done this through introducing somewhat abstracted pieces of machinery, little air vents, and designs on the ship body. To enhance motion and scale I also refine the exhaust.

### Question

What is a normal/bump map? And can I make one without having a high poly model first?

*Mitchel Cleary, US*

### Answer

*Glen replies*

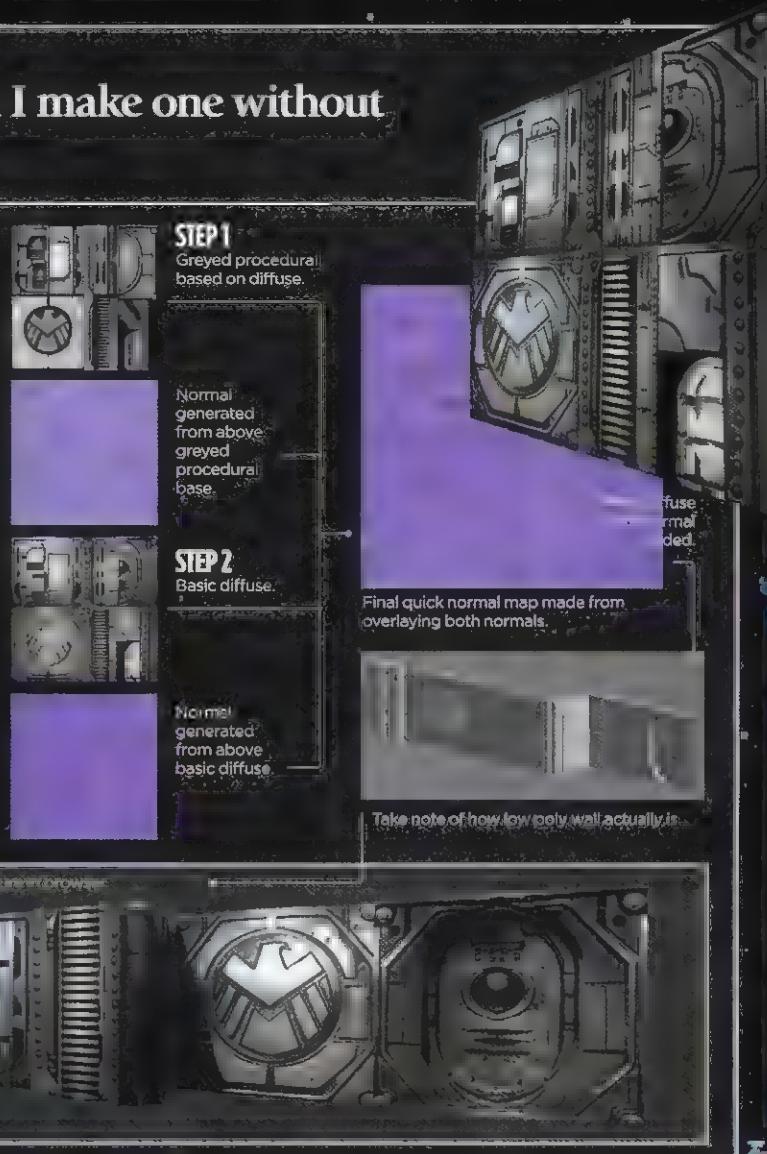
**Question**  
What is a normal/bump map? In layman's terms it's a texture map that takes fine details, curved edges and material properties as higher geometry when rendered in the game. It's great for beveling the sides of a box to appear smooth, or faking a series of bolts to pop out of a flat surface as the character and light passes by something.

**Answer**  
When creating normals from scratch for *Marvel Ultimate Alliance* we developed a system. First was breaking down the diffuse (what the game engine reads as the surface paint and colour of an object) into its basic shapes for the large shapes we wanted to fake with the normal. We did this by painting a version of the diffuse entirely out of basic black and white shapes using gradients and fills. Make sure your shapes are clean and as flawless as possible, because when you run this through the nvidia Photoshop plug-in (<http://tinyurl.com/hdvhg>) or a second-party program such as *Crazybump* ([www.crazybump.com](http://www.crazybump.com)) even the smallest inconsistency will produce odd results. My trick is to

use paths when at all possible and the Photoshop layer effect Inner Glow to get smooth, controlled gradients.

For fine details, take your painted diffuse, make the colour saturation zero and run it through the filter, then apply that as a faint Overlay layer. You'll want to erase a lot of extraneous details that will come from this. This is also an opportunity to introduce a level of surface detail by doing the same process to a Grunge layer.

Now you can plug the normal map into the material editor in 3ds max and see the difference between an object with no normal map and one with a quick self-generated normal map. The quality won't match taking it from a super high poly model, but for, say, a third person RPG it may be just right.





My speed painting, 'Nightmist', was created in one night with two pens and established a look for a whole level in a game.

## What are the skills necessary to be a successful game concept artist?

### Philip replies

There are the obvious skills all artists should have a solid foundation in, including composition, perspective, anatomy and colour theory. But the fundamentals are only going to get a concept artist so far. Here are a few additional necessary skills you'll only hear mentioned from insiders within the entertainment industries.

Probably the most important skill a game concept artist should possess is versatility. It's extremely important that a

concept artist has the ability to draw and paint in a variety of styles across multiple disciplines. The more versatility an artist has, the more confident an art director will be in their all-round ability.

Another key skill is speed. It's extremely important for an artist to generate a variety of ideas quickly and clearly. The more ideas they can get down early, the better chance the team has of finding a visual gem that supports gameplay early.

It isn't unheard of for multiple concept artists to be asked to generate a number of ideas based on the same concept or the exact same assignment. This approach ensures the development team fully explores all the visual possibilities before deciding on a final approach. The offshoot of this is the reality that some friendly competition does occur from time to time within a team of concept artists. This, combined with the regular day-to-day revisions, means a concept artist must have a thick skin, or at least learn to develop one.



The image above is one of a few different styles I work in. This versatility is extremely attractive to art directors and thus increases your marketability.

### Q&A

**How do you get so many different looks into a game without suffering from memory loss – especially on consoles?**

*William Everett, US*

### Answer

Glen replies

We went to a lot of trouble to get the most out of the memory restrictions for the X-Men Legends and Marvel's Ultimate Alliance games. Three things made the difference when it came to our art department meeting somewhat unrealistic deadlines.

One was strong dedication and leadership in devoting ourselves to a set standard and process. Second was

painting the walls and floors on one base page for an entire look. Mitch Cotie and myself were responsible for developing the looks for each level by painting tilesets that would all be on one 512 base page. With good art direction from art lead Dan Hay and clever use of the base page and mirroring, we could get several straight wall variants and then diagonal wall pieces.

Lastly, we had a set pipeline whereby the texture artists would pull off of these pages as though they were keys to generate textures and share in the mapping to

create the rest of the objects and produce a great cohesive environment. I can't give all the secrets away for how we made them work, but if you play the games you should be able to figure out what our various techniques were.



Memory restrictions presented a wealth of challenges for the artists behind the Marvel: Ultimate Alliance game, pictured in this exclusive screenshot.

### Q&A

**Whenever I'm designing my characters, I get stuck in the same ruts. What's the best approach to get myself inspired?**

*Max Gordon, England*

### Answer

Andy replies

As artists we are constantly seeking out inspiration, and striving to find new sources of it day to day. When we're inspired by something we naturally do our best work, and conversely when we're bored our work will inevitably suffer. The trouble is that inspiration doesn't always come to us easily when we need it the most.

There are many accessible ways we can find the inspiration we thrive on: other

artists, movies, books or events in everyday life to name just a few. But another source of inspiration can be found in the way we work.

Instead of constantly approaching designs in the same way technically speaking, try mixing things up a bit to ensure you stay fresh. That way you can avoid getting bogged down if you're using the same methods over and over again, and get yourself out of that frustrating creative rut every artist dreads. I've outlined three of my favourite ways of working opposite

**Question**

I hear the term 'concept artist' all the time, but what exactly does a concept artist do?

By **James Hobbs** (Lead Concept Scenarist)

**Answer**

**Gary replies**

A concept artist comes up with ideas and solutions to a design brief or 'problem'. There are several different roles within a concept art team, and concept artists come from several backgrounds. In my job as a concept art director, I work with the concept team as a whole, helping them to generate a variety of imagery and ideas that can be anything from illustrations that show how areas fit together, colour keys and much faster pencil sketches that are invaluable to the modelling teams for creating cohesive shapes and details in game worlds. When creating art myself I tend to focus on either colour keys or principal images.

These images are imperative to games art production as they are intended to draw together the basic ideas and shapes for an area into a cohesive illustration that

encapsulates the essence of how that part of the game world will look.

Because they are so important, these images can take a lot longer to



Concept art shows the way forward for production artists.



Use materials, light and depth to distil and emphasise an area.

produce than regular concept images, in fact anywhere from 10 to 20 hours of painting time can be spent on these pieces.

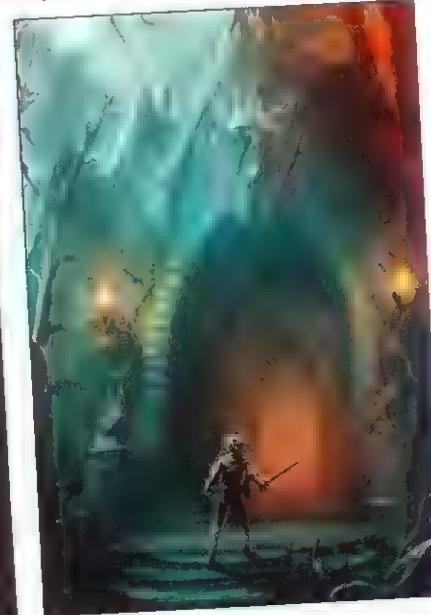
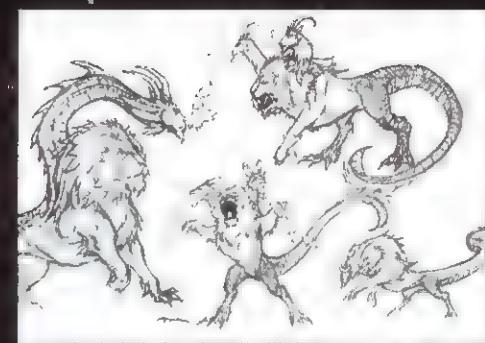
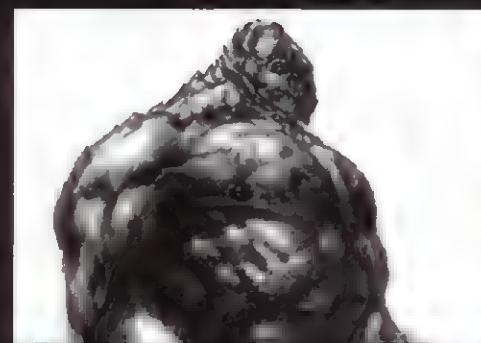
I try to encompass the textural feel within these images, along with a strong suggestion of how lighting, shadow work and special effects, such as sub-surface scattering or

volumetric effects, for example) should be balanced. A couple of my principal images, combined with a cluster of other illustrations and sketches, can then be put together into a solid 'pack' of art info that can then be taken into production, to show the teams the way forward in the next stages of game development.

**Artist's secret****GET EMOTIONAL**

When creating concept art I try to evoke the art of emotion in the image that can capture the intended mood a game, and I do this in many ways, sketches and pencil art, and also, not just once or just once, now that I'm the director of what makes it come alive and not just, and not, with love and care, but with a certain art, most importantly, care, on paper.

Gary Tonge, concept art director

**Three approaches to inspire better design**

**Silhouette approach:** paint using pure black and paint only silhouettes. This will force you to concentrate only on the shape. Create a layer above the silhouette, group the layers together, paint in the new layer and it will stay within the silhouette.

**Painterly approach:** paint using either a compressed circle brush or a texture brush. The brush strokes alone can inspire. Painting in this way feels more traditional. You can also use a texture brush for your eraser so you can cut into the strokes.

**Actual pencil:** this may seem ridiculous but I find more and more artists (myself included) saying that they never touch a pencil any more. But I've always found drawing with an actual pencil on actual paper can give me extra inspiration.

## Question

I've heard production artists need to be very fast – how can I improve my painting speed?

Si Kerr, Scotland

## Answer

Daryl replies

 It's true that artists in a production environment have to pump out high-quality artwork within tight schedules – something a lot of new artists have trouble adapting to. While I don't advise anyone to rush their artwork, there are certain things you can do to make your life easier and increase your speed in the process.

Before you even boot up your software, make sure you have a clear understanding of what you want to accomplish. Draw some quick thumbnails on scrap paper, write out a few rough ideas, give yourself a bit of a roadmap to follow. Unless you have weeks on end to iterate on an image, having at least some sort of plan is vital to the whole process.

The next practice I would recommend would be to configure your workspace to meet your personal needs. Spend some time setting up hotkeys and actions for all your frequently used operations. I have hotkeys and actions set up for creating layers, flipping the canvas, running filters – basically anything that I know I'll be doing frequently. This sounds pretty obvious but it can save you an abundance of time.

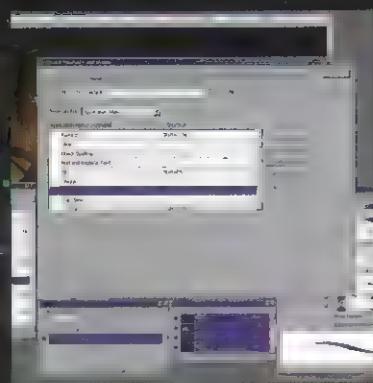


When painting, try to concentrate on the big shapes and design as a whole – don't worry about the details. It's more important to nail your composition and overall values.

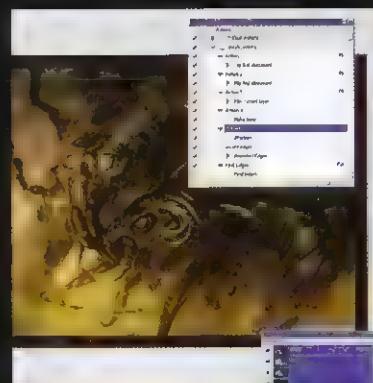
Finally, practice! The more familiar you become with your tools, the faster you'll be able to work with them. Try to arrange a schedule to give yourself a little art workout every day.

Don't get bogged down by small details when painting. Focusing on the big shapes and overall design will enable you to work much faster.

## Step by step: Four simple ways to become a faster painter



 Set up your workspace  
Alt/Option+Shift+Ctrl/Cmd+K in Photoshop brings up your keyboard customisation options. Memorise the important ones and try customising them in ways that make sense to your workflow. The less time you need to spend hunting through menus, the more time you will have to concentrate on the act of painting itself.



 Alt/Option+F9 brings up your Actions window. Actions can be used to simplify repetitive tasks, and are great for anything that has multiple steps involved. They work by recording the steps and then playing them back with one keystroke. You can even save out your actions and import them to another computer, in much the same way as with custom brushes.



 Try to think about your painting in broad terms – sometimes it helps to zoom way out and look at your painting as a simple thumbnail image. Train yourself not to get caught up in unnecessary detailing that doesn't add anything to the overall picture. It's an easily avoidable waste of time. If I zoom closer into one of my images, you can see most of my detail is sketchy and suggested.



 Improving your knowledge of your tools will definitely help you paint faster, but not necessarily better. Do studies from life, anatomy books, movies, basically anything to help you build up the visual library in your head. Here is a fast sketch I did of an action shot from the Russell Crowe movie Gladiator. Speed sketching like this teaches you to keep loose and fluid.



Technical restrictions and game-engine features greatly dictate what is possible.

## Question

When creating environmental space concepts, how important are technical specifications?

Issue 107 (15/05/08)

## Answer

Gary replies

 My experience with games has taught me many things, the earliest of these was to understand technology, at least on a technical artistic level. Some of the most important facets when working on conceptual illustrations for game environments are understanding the target platform (console/PC), the likely interaction the player will have in the game world, gameplay 'real estate' (area sizes) and how the code is to be written (or, in many cases, is already written) to visually represent the game world. This final part can be a plethora of rules that control the options you have for:



Lighting plays a significant role in the look of a game. The look of many titles depends on the successful coding of a lighting model.

environmental representation. Lighting systems are a big factor in this. A great many games have their look dictated by how well coded the 'lighting model' is.

When painting conceptual images early in a pre-production cycle it's important to work with tech to develop the code so that certain looks can be achieved. A few years back the options for distinctive game worlds were restricted greatly by platform-specific deficiencies, but the recent jump in specs for next-gen consoles greatly increases the scope for interesting ways to use shapes, materials and lighting.

Currently, in many cases, it's important to be able to purvey these artistic ideas and requirements early on to the code department. In turn they can write systems to accommodate the new visual skews.

Communication is all important when working up new ideas, so that code and art fully understand each other in order to develop great ideas into working game worlds.

## Question

What are the expectations from the production team with regards to the translation of your concept designs into 3D game art?

Issue 107 (15/05/08)

## Answer

Daniel replies

 More often than not my concept work leaves a lot of scope for the 3D artists to contribute. I actively

encourage them to interpret the theme I've established, to add layers of depth that I hadn't envisioned!

Evidently, their contribution needs to be based on a thorough understanding of the functional and stylistic requirements of the design. It's a risky path to take as you can get very different results from different modellers. This is where an experienced artist with good knowledge of the game and sharp intuition can really take a half-baked

design to the next level, while someone lacking those skills can't see its potential and totally ruin it. It's this very ability to analyse, understand and build upon an idea that separates the true 3D artists from mere modellers.



This concept piece was the basis for an in-game design, though the details were loosely adapted.

## Question

Because video games are a digital medium, is it necessary that concept art for them should also be digital?

Issue 107 (15/05/08)

## Answer

Aly replies

 Although video games are digital, concept art is just what it says it is, concept art, and - as a drawing - doesn't exist in the game. As a result, concept art can generally be produced in any medium the artist likes, although the client may have preferences, so being able to work to requirement is essential. These days, however, it's better if the artwork can initially be presented digitally, so the designs can be easily swapped between the different departments. A hard copy can always be printed out later. A lot of artists start out traditionally, sketching in pencil and then scanning the image, working it up digitally. In the end what the digital medium has enabled is greater flexibility in the options for artists. Personally I vary my process, sometimes sketching on a lightbox and scanning the image, but often a quick sketch that can be easily emailed once completed means I

work with Photoshop and a tablet or with SketchBook, which has a Send Mail option built in.



Petra Hepburn, produced in Photoshop for a Concept Art challenge, has a traditional look.



The idea is to first concentrate only on issues such as design, form, silhouette and values. After those problems have been solved, you can focus on introducing colour.

## Question

Are there any methods to help reduce my fear of colour when approaching a concept or painting?

*Feargal McCarroll, Ireland*

## Answer

Andy replies

 Well, I can give you one approach that can help. Especially when doing concept artwork, I recommend that you first work out the design in black and white. It's a very good idea to approach a design in this manner because it's unrealistic to try to solve all those challenging issues of designing all at the same time. Breaking things down into steps will only make the process much more manageable.

Of course, there may be times when it makes sense to incorporate colour into the initial design phase, but I find that most of the time black and white sketches or paintings work really well.



Play around with the blending modes. When properly used they will make your paintings shine.

It also tends to be good for the production process. The art director, or whoever is going to approve the designs, can then concentrate on the design itself which makes their job much easier. So it's helpful for everyone.

After you have painted up the design, create a new layer above the black and white painting in Photoshop. Set the blending mode of that layer to Colour. Now you can paint in that layer with whatever colour you want and it will colourise your black and white painting without covering up any of the detail you've created up to that point. And because of that, you can experiment with your colour options to find the right choices, and thus lose the fear.

The Colour Mode layer is just the lay-in foundation for the colouring process. It's there to give you a solid base to work with. And now that you have that base, you can continue painting and refining.

*See also: [How to Create a Concept Art Portfolio](#)*

## What are the goals you set when starting on a new piece of concept art?

*Andy Carroll, Ireland*

### Daniel replies

 The criteria that determine the approach are multiple, but I'll touch on only a few aspects. It is unlikely to satisfy all design requirements as well as self-imposed standards equally well; therefore it is important to prioritise them.

The concept pieces I generate usually fall into one of three categories, with rather arbitrary and fuzzy boundaries.

High-level concepts involve addressing product positioning, style and the nature of the world that the game takes place in. These are intended as dialogue starters and inspirational pieces for both game design and the art team.

Look-and-feel concepts focus on location-specific environments. They touch on the general overall movement of the terrain within the scene, the level of technology and the complexity of architectural structures, colour palettes and lighting. The focus at this level of

zoom is to assess the piece from the standpoint of how this particular moment is integrated within the larger experience.

Production designs are intended to be handed out to 3D modellers to be materialised into game-ready assets. The delicate balance here is to provide an amount of information that is sufficient yet not redundant.

Depending on the category, I try to identify the elements of visual expression that best serves the purpose of the piece and make early decisions accordingly. I chose the perspective: anywhere from the forced, three vanishing points type (for the sake of drama), to mundane three-quarters view (for good form description); the composition: from dynamic, tense, conflict-suggestive to static, serene and objective; texture: realism versus illusion, generic textures versus material-defining ones and accents versus supporting surfaces; lighting: from moody, dramatic, capricious, to even impartial and descriptive.



*Bonedog is intended as a production-ready creature design. Depending on the skill level of the modeller, orthographic views may not always be necessary.*

*Clockwork is an example of a high-level concept used as a visual aid in pitching an idea for a game.*



## Question

When designing game characters, are there any specific rules to follow?

Sophie Ali, England

## Answer

Aly replies

 Initially, you should be given a brief by the client which will outline the basic features of the character, the time period, the personality and the degree of freedom you have in designing the outfit and accessories. If you are simply producing a one-off character piece, usually straight on, five main points to keep in mind are:

1. Ensure the whole character is in view. If the understanding is to be able to see the character from behind, then a second drawing showing the rear view would be necessary. Ultimately, a three view 'turnaround' or orthographic would be required to see the character from all sides.

2. Keep the lighting simple and revealing. The priority of any character concept work is to present the maximum information to the next stage of the process.

3. Research details. Don't think you know what something looks like, when a quick internet search will confirm accuracy.

4. Expression. Get an idea from the client what the dominating traits are and try to represent that in the artwork.

5. Posing. You could draw an action pose, but initially the best bet would be something more relaxed which enables maximum information to be presented.

Make sure your character is presented in full view; don't be tempted to draw only from the waist up. Details count.



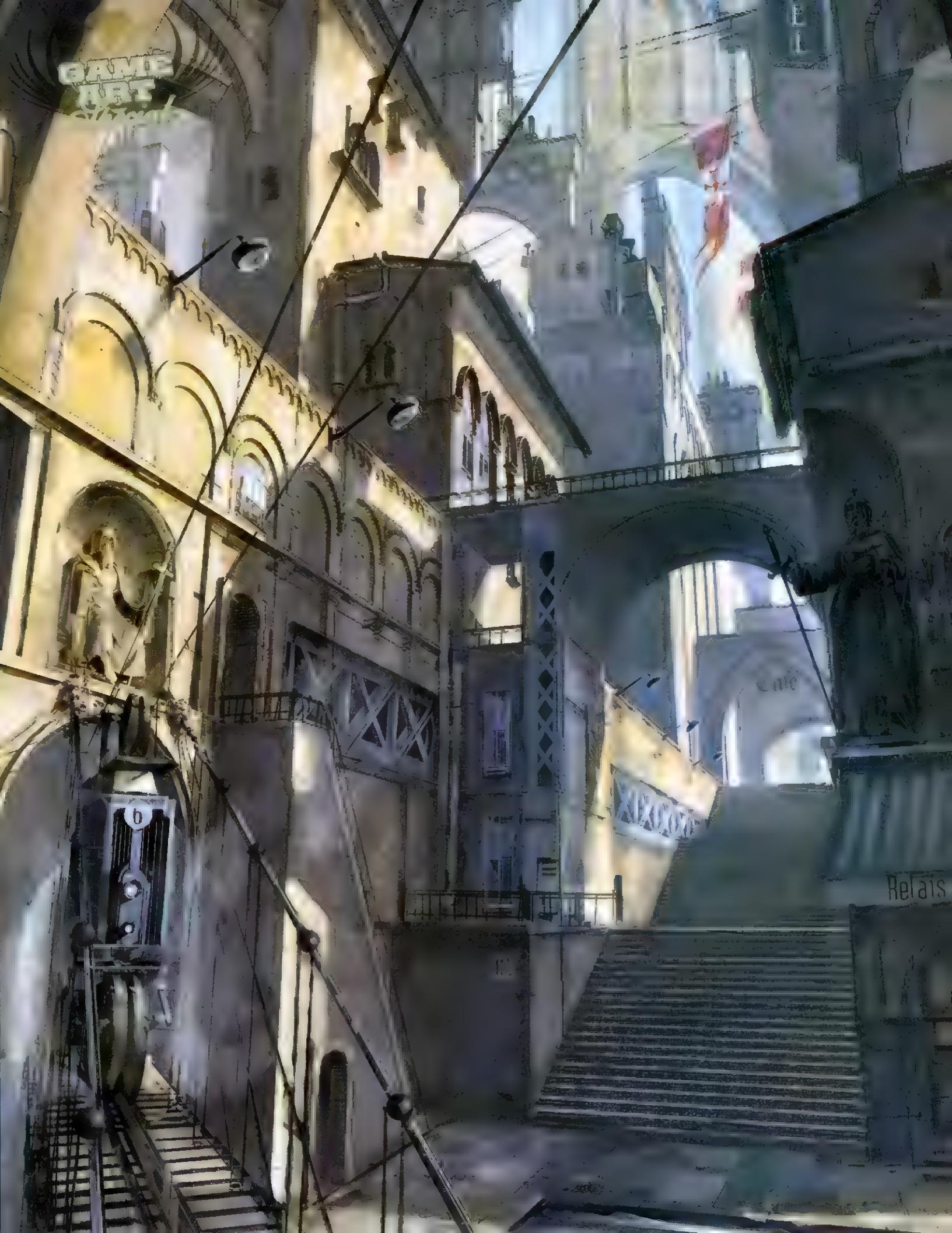
## Create a detailed game character from scratch



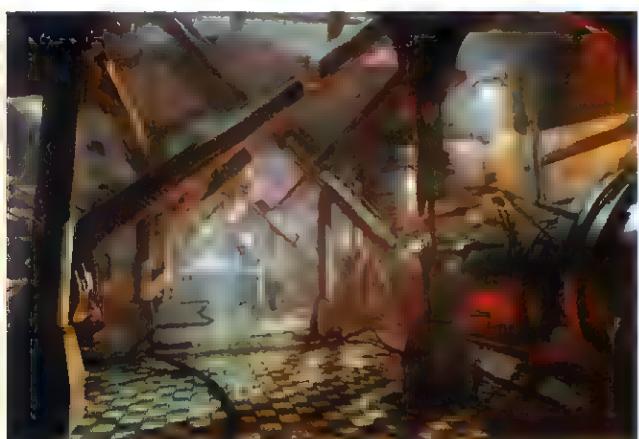
 This design is based on a specific brief. The female character that I've been asked to create is a desert-dwelling, 'savage' sort of character in a future setting. She was intended to have a firearm, and specific items of futuristic apparel. This was the initial sketch.

 After a couple of changes to that first sketch, the idea was approved by the client and I started blocking in some basic colour. At this point, I looked for some reference materials for the clothing and thought about whether any background would be needed.

 The final design with a texture overlay added. This tightens up the image making it less hard on the eye against the original white background. Further development may be required from this point; specific details of some of the accessories or expression information.



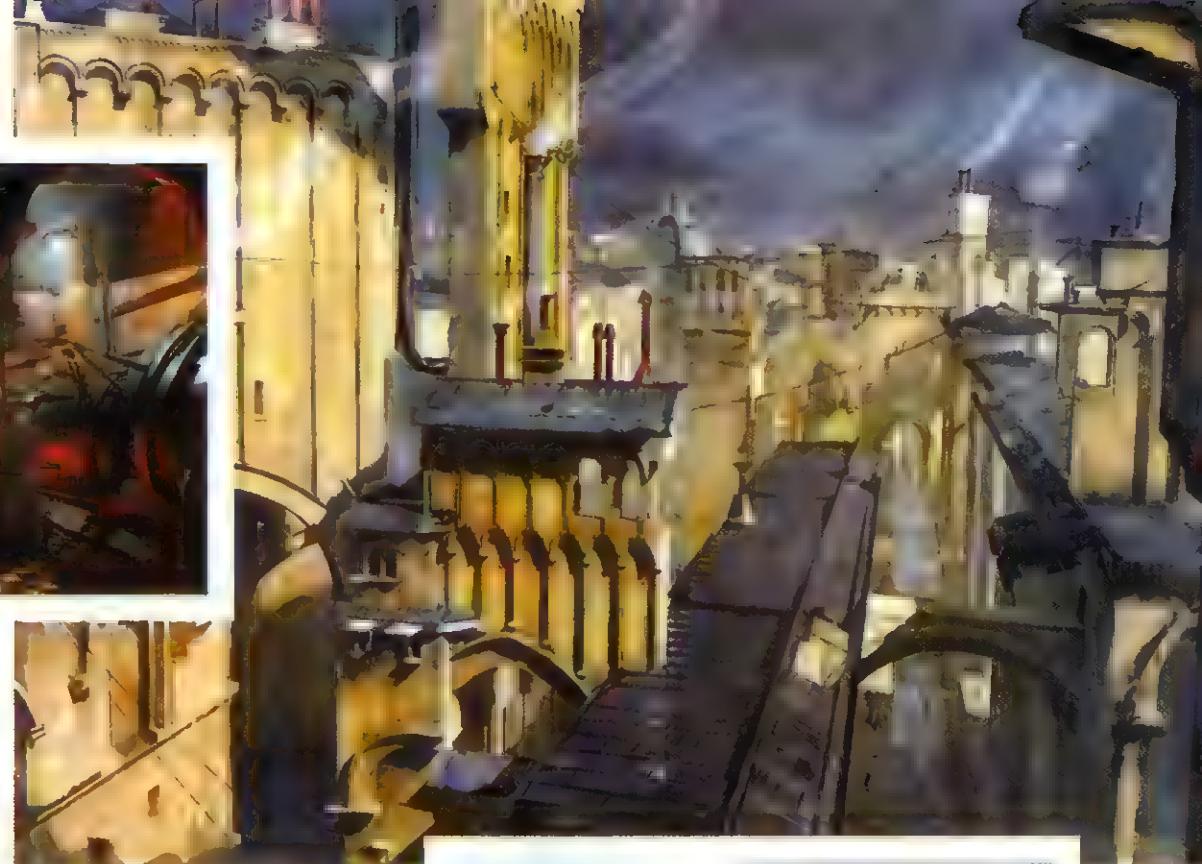
Opposite page and right, Viktor's stunning artwork for the new Paris-based game *The Crossing*, and below, some of his extensive work for *Half-Life 2*.



**A** transportation design degree from Pasadena's renowned Art Center kicked off Viktor Antonov's ten-year journey through art, cinema and games. His work for Valve's *Half-Life 2* and its spin-off occupied police state *City 17*, was recognised by both BAFTA and the Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences as a feat of architectural design, also winning him a commission from Valve's collaborators Arkane to build another extraordinary venue for the game *The Crossing*, due in 2008.

Picturing an alternate reality Paris in which the Renaissance never happened and the Knights Templar reign, it is promising to be the artist's best work yet.

Other work includes design for Christian Volckman's lauded animated feature, *Renaissance*, and matte paintings for *Skyline*. Having recently founded The Building design studio, Viktor is now working on an illustrated novel called *The Colony* and is a visiting design instructor at the Baden Würtemberg Film Academy.



# Art Surgery

PERSONALLY SOLVING YOUR ART PROBLEMS...  
EMAIL **SURGERY@IMAGINEFX.COM**

“I have been working on this for over 11 days and I’m baffled at where to go next. I’m struggling with lighting and composition, as well as colour.”

*Sam Girgis, US*

# The FANTASY & SCIENCE-FICTION ADD ImagineEX reader

## Sam Gigris



Sam, 30, is from New Jersey and is currently working as a graphic/web designer in the dance industry. He aspires to be a freelance illustrator, having recently got into illustration.  
[www.darkaxe.com](http://www.darkaxe.com)

## SAM'S PROBLEM

#### HOW CLEN CAN HELP

FOR BETTER OR WORSE, IT'S A LOT OF KNOWLEDGE AND IT'S EASY TO TAKE YOU AND GET IT WRONG. IT'S MUCH BETTER TO STOP AND SAY, "WHAT'S A CHANCE TO DO A LITTLE WORK AND GET A FEW THINGS WORKING?"



## Part one: Starting to dissect the process

**My first area of concern to best answer Sam's question is where to choose the light source.**  
I am going to go with the top right for the main light source, making it fairly strong as we are in an outdoor daytime environment. I'll pick a secondary light source to have fun with some colour, probably best to have him slightly underlit with this second source. I re-crop in a little closer and on an angle to give the composition a little more action and get the main elements away from being dead centre for a little asymmetrical balance.

**1** As mentioned earlier I want to begin by addressing some of the composition elements, starting with a tighter crop. I will also try to change some of the main shapes of the creature and hero so they can help lead the viewer's eye in the right direction

**2** Choosing the light source and having a general plan from the beginning is key. It also helps with your pencil when you can think of the cast shadows and how they can help define your forms.

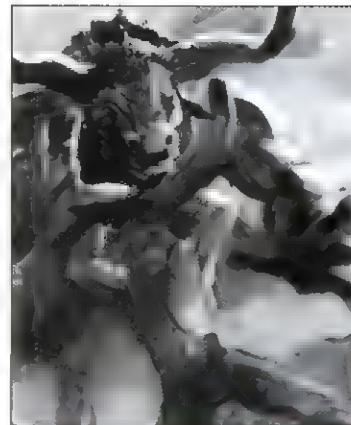


Glen's first step was to crop closer in on the figures of Hercules and the minotaur. Sam's primary daylight light source is a good choice, and by adding a secondary underlit light source, this helps to define shapes and forms

## Part two: Block in some basic shapes and shadows from the chosen light source



Having made some basic choices, I want to work pretty loose and quick to give myself a sense of what I can do to make the lighting more interesting, more believable and use the shapes created from this to help lead the viewer through the painting and best tell the story.



**1** A great way to help the lighting in a piece is to have the backdrop reflect the type of light you are trying to create. Sam's initial work could have got him into a bit of a visual bind because he has a very tumultuous sky that shares the same level of saturation and colour as the foreground elements. Splitting this space up and introducing even some midground texture can help.



Glen helped Sam to give more of a sense of depth by clever use of light sources.

**"I usually think in terms of line rather than shape and form, and the end result is everything seems to be on one plane"**

### Surgery diary

#### DAY ONE

Glen has thrown together one of the firsts for the minotaur. But I have some questions before I start experimenting. Can I move

the anatomy around, can I change the expression of the minotaur, can I try a closer crop, and do you want to keep the Kevin Sorbo look, or can I make suggestions with the Hercules face and change it a bit?

Sam: Let's change it up a bit. Yes to everything, though I'd like to keep Kevin Sorbo. He made a great Hercules. But if you want to change it,



go ahead! I don't know what to look for when it comes to light and colour. I tried to create an image using only greys, then added colour, but don't want to repeat that

**DAY TWO**  
Glen using my reference, gives me the idea to turn the horns up and out of the frame for more depth and to help lead the viewer into the picture

# ImagineNation Art Surgery

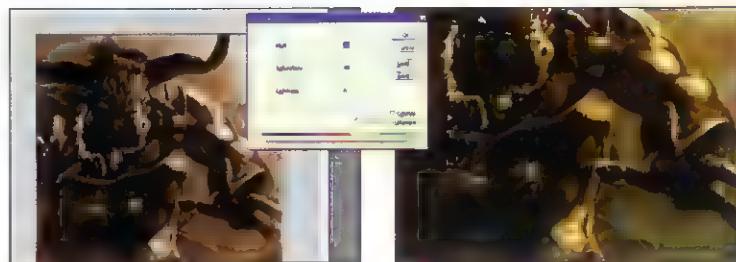
## Part three: Think about the colour of the lights and paint this up



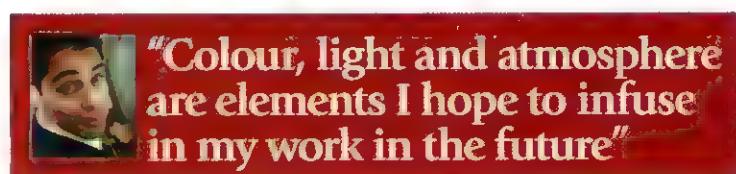
Finishing the tight tonal drawing and getting ready to paint can be a scary jump to make. Often I'll get to like a drawing so much that I'll often be afraid to paint it for fear of ruining the image. You have to have a clear and concise idea in your head as to what you want to accomplish by adding your hues and colours and then dive right in.



- 1 I'm just finishing up the greyscale image. I create a duplicate layer and use Brightness and Contrast, reducing both until I get a dull, dark image. From here I can quickly erase parts of this layer, starting with the most important storytelling lighting elements. This helps reduce unnecessary details and 'visual diarrhoea'



- 2 When I'm ready to start painting in the colour on the final image, I'll usually begin by making the image a duotone sepia colour, which I do by using the Hue and Saturation, checking the Colourise option and then fading (Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+F) with either a Darken or Multiply effect.

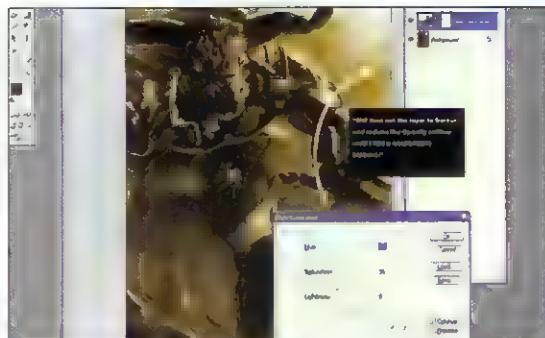


- 3 I start with a quick colour layer above the sepia tone. Working quick and loose to get the base colours down. From here it's about deciding what is the most dramatic and important areas to really hone, leaving the non-compositional elements to be filled in by the viewer's imagination

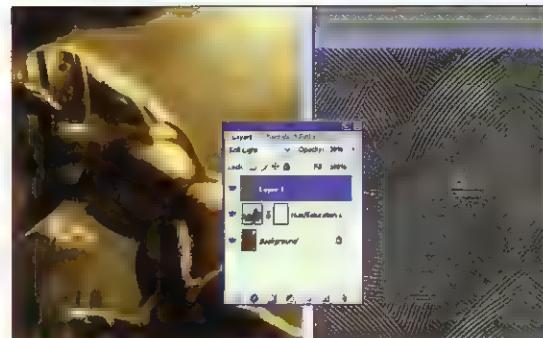
## Part four: Bringing it all together



Once much of the lighting and colour values are in, it's easier to focus on the polish and ultimate message of your painting. Getting a painting to have a finished/polished look can involve a series of different approaches and techniques. Sometimes I'll want a painting to have that classic old glazed feel. I will often use some texturing to give a piece some more character, and then lastly do some minor yet very important last opaque touches to really make it 'sing'.



- 1 I add a classic, glazed feel by running one final adjustment layer of Hue and Saturation, set it to colorise in a sepia tone and fade the adjustment layer until all the colours subtly share a tinge of the same palette.



- 2 Lastly I will drop a homemade layer of brush strokes over the painting. Set the layer blending to Soft Light, opacity 20-30 per cent. I go back into the brush stroke layer and erase where the strokes take away from the details.

### DAY THREE

Sam: I'm not going to do much to this one. I will just add some color to the background and the figure's hair.

Glen: I'm going to add some color to the figure's hair and the background.

Day 3 notes: I'm not going to do much to this one.

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Day 3 notes: I'm not going to do much to this one.

### Day 3 notes: This

process is a bit slow, but I think it's worth it. I'm not going to do much to this one. I will just add some color to the background and the figure's hair.

Glen: I'm going to add some color to the figure's hair and the background.

Day 3 notes: I'm not going to do much to this one.

### more of a dramatic

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Day 3 notes: I'm not going to do much to this one.



# The End Result

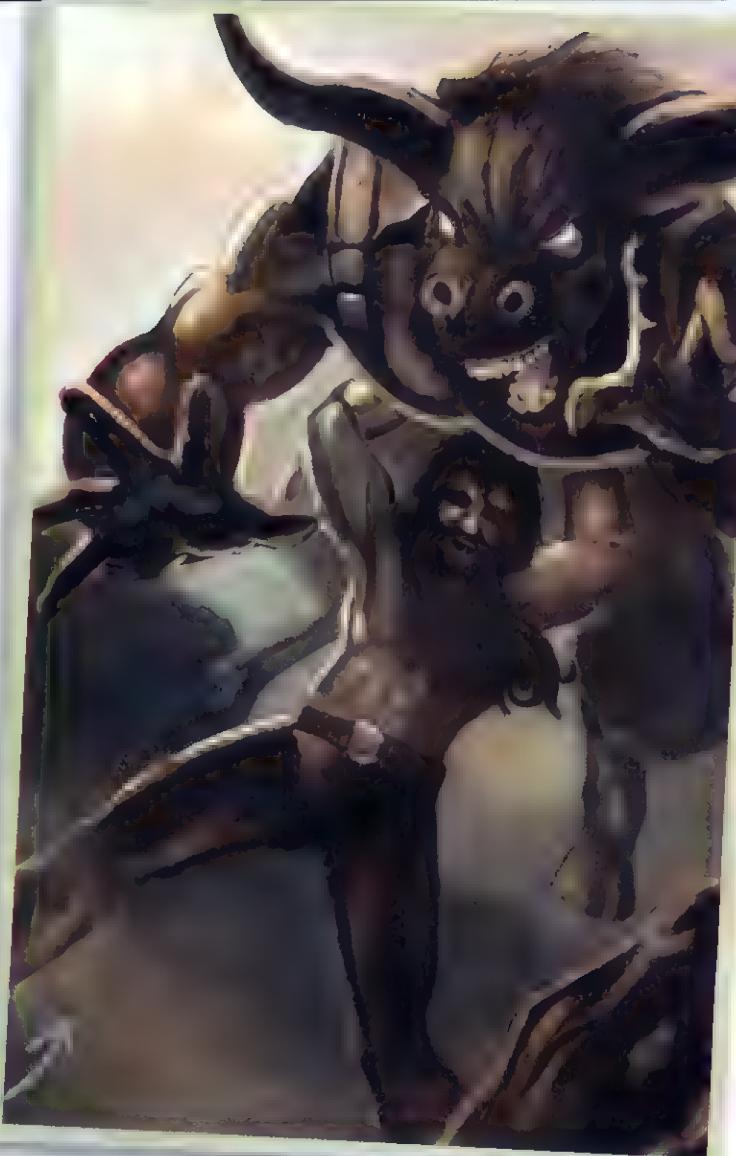
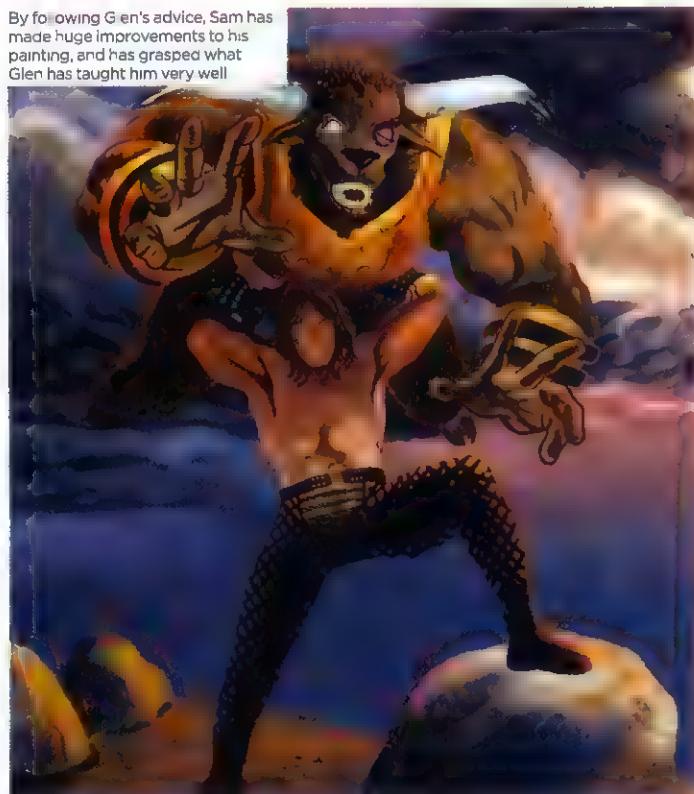


Glen Angus



"Art is a way of thinking. In this Art Surgery I have learned to change my thought process and determine a light plan and stick to it. Not to mention make better composition choices"

By following Glen's advice, Sam has made huge improvements to his painting, and has grasped what Glen has taught him very well



Glen, wow, thanks Sam! I'm really glad you like it

#### DAY FIVE

Sam: started from scratch rather than trying to fix the old painting, and treated it as a spea

painting. I started in the oil paint and in acrylic blocking out the light.

Knowing where to put the saturation and saturated colour is a challenge.

Glen: it just takes a bit to get used to changing the way you

## IMAGINEFX DIGITAL ART ImagineFX Art Surgery

### NEED ART HELP?

If you've got an art problem you'd like to get help with, email our expert panel of artists at [surgery@imaginefx.com](mailto:surgery@imaginefx.com)



# Become a

# GAMES ARTIST

Want to create art that helps shape the look of games that will be played by millions around the world?

Video games have been part of mainstream culture for 30 years, and in that time the graphical landscape has changed beyond all recognition. In the beginning there was little more than bricks, bats and Space Invaders. People were impressed, 20 years ago, if there were more than eight colours on screen. And even ten years back 3D graphics were still a novelty. Now, with the latest generation of home PCs and console systems throwing polygons and cinematic effects around like confetti, games are capable of immersing us in truly coherent worlds. From comic books and manga to stop motion and cel animation, and even through to the latest Hollywood blockbusters, game studios are now able to draw on any number of classical or pop culture influences when creating the visuals for their latest epics.

Budgets in the millions are now commonplace, which means that publishers can afford to put huge teams to work on a game for months or even years. And with the emphasis as much on how a game looks as how it plays, a sizeable portion of that team is dedicated solely to its artwork. While the in-game content is created by 3D modellers, animators and texture artists, it's the artist who creates the original concept work that develops the visual language and can ultimately enable a game to possess a cohesive and unique look and feel. With few other jobs offering quite such a potent combination of responsibility and creative

freedom, it's little wonder so many are uncertain whether they've got what it takes to make it as a video game concept artist.

## KICK SOME ASS

"As a concept artist my main goal is to offer to my client the most impressive, original and 'ass-kicking' concepts," says Aleksi Briclot, a concept artist whose designs have helped shape the look of games such as Splinter Cell, Cold Fear and Dungeon Runners. "It's not just about being able to paint and draw well, it's about finding the best ideas - the ones that will make the game-playing experience a strong one."

It's the concept artist's crucial involvement during the earliest stages of a game's development that undoubtedly makes it such an attractive proposition. The game's subject matter, general storyline and cast of key characters may be laid down in words, but it's up to the concept artist to bring those concepts to life and influence all subsequent art development for the game. At the outset,

at least, they are relatively free to let their imaginations run riot.

"We tend not to worry too much about technical limitations in the very early stage of brainstorming

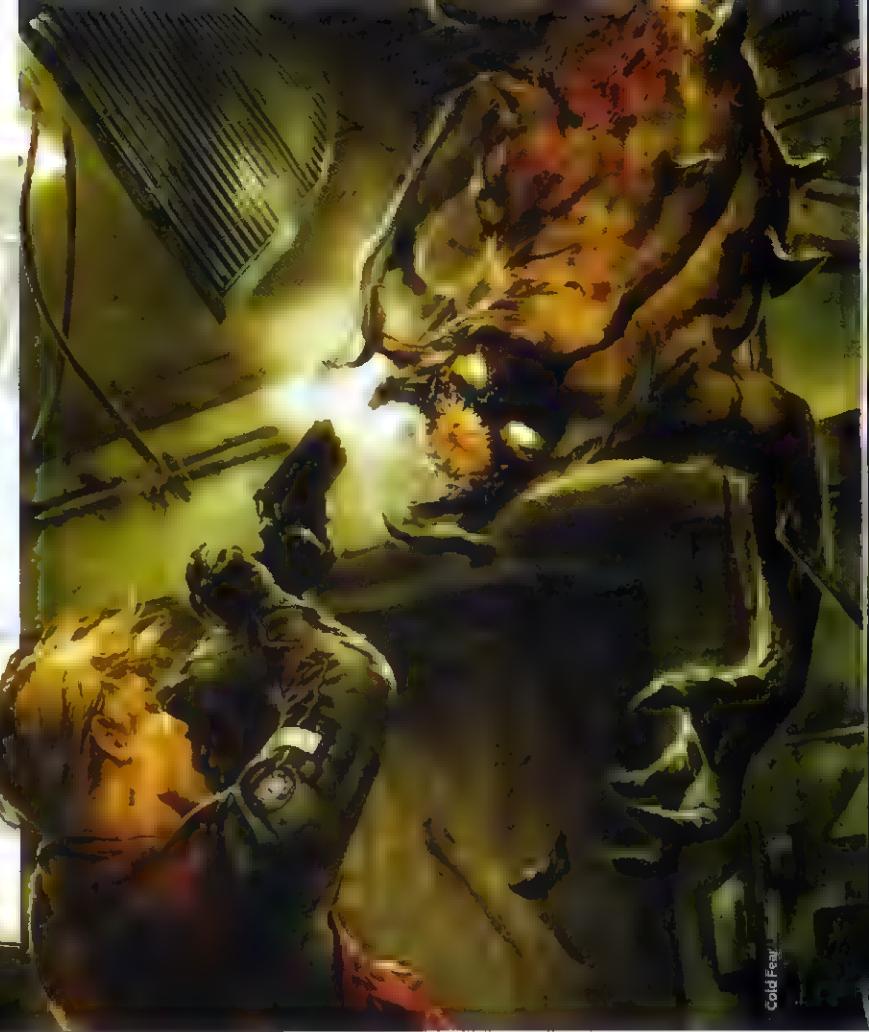
ideas for a new game, but it does become much more important once the platform has been decided upon," explains Daniel Dociu, art director at ArenaNet, a division of Korean online gaming pioneer NCsoft.



## HEAVY HITTERS

Weapon designs for upcoming title *Guild Wars: Eye Of The North*, by Daniel Dociu. "In the case of *Guild Wars*, we have five people on the concept team," he says.





Cold Fear

## The roles of game artists is becoming more specialised, but it really does vary from team to team

Jolyon Webb

"That said, we're eventually trying to create in-game art that captures the essence of the original concept, rather than produce a very literal, slavish representation."

### NO SUCH THING AS NORMAL

There's more to the job than filling a book with sketches and then sitting back and waiting for the rest of the team to bring the game to fruition, however. While the games industry has grown, the development process remains a remarkably fluid one, particularly in terms of how teams are structured and the workload is divided. A concept artist might simply be a generalist who also works on 2D or 3D in-game assets, or they might be part of a large team that really does nothing but sketch and digitally paint all day. There simply is no typical job description.

"The roles of games artists are becoming more specialised, but it really does vary from team to team," agrees Jolyon Webb, creative manager at TruSim, a division of Blitz Games. "At Blitz Games, for example, we work



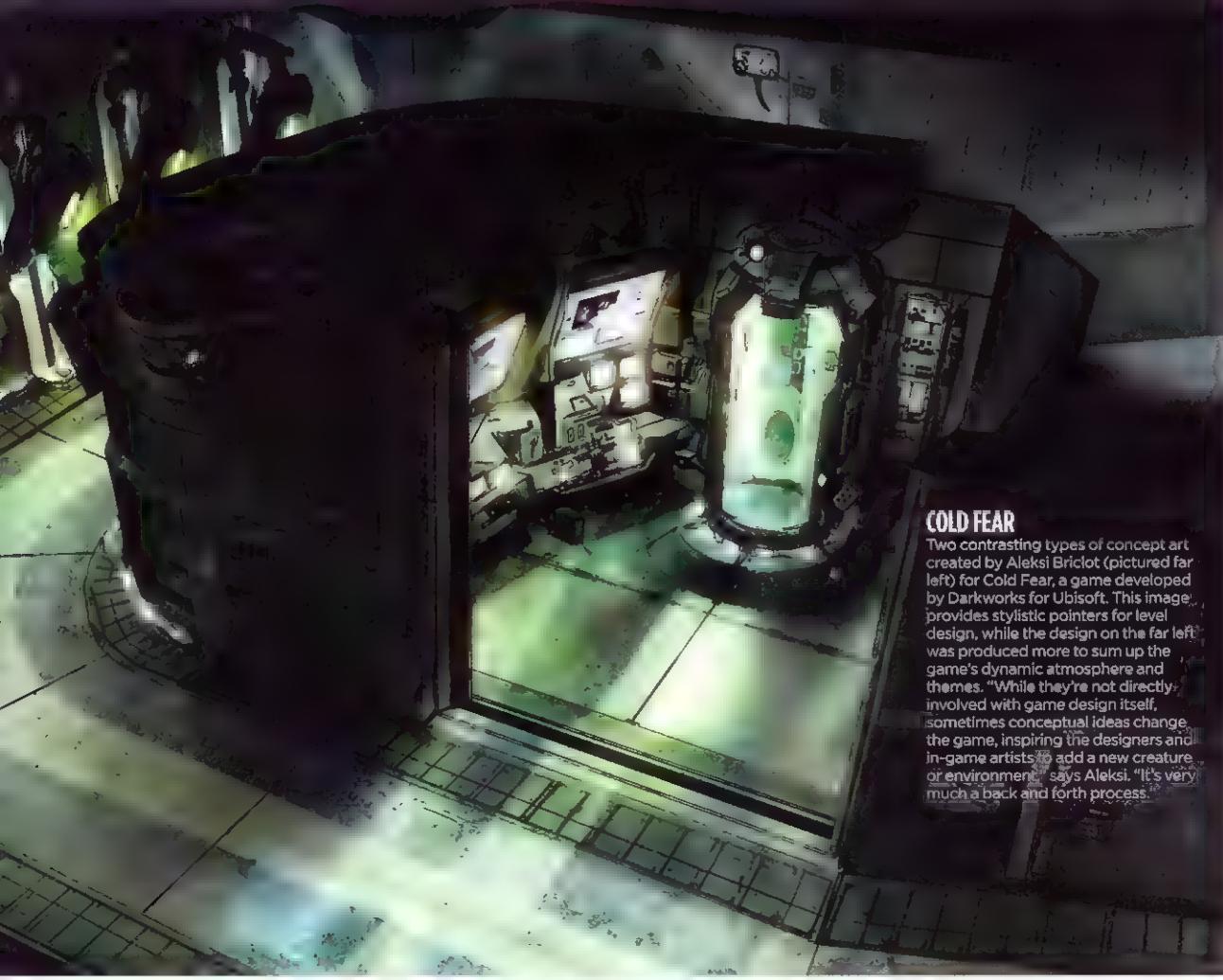
Marvel Ultimate Heroes: Raven City Art vs. Vision

on a large range of styles and game genres and so have a large number of specialist artists who work purely on 2D concepting, with a few working on 3D concept design."

These artists, says Jolyon, are as likely to be called upon to tackle character concepting as they are vehicle designs or environments, though the studio naturally plays to the strengths of each individual. While it stands to reason that the larger the team the more specialised the role of the concept artist, a lot of flexibility often remains.

Original concept design for the Atlantis level in Marvel: Ultimate Alliance, top, together with a final screenshot from the game. "Our team was composed of low poly modellers for objects, one modeller for specialised tileset creation, five guys doing textures full-time, and one-to-two dedicated concept artists," says Glen Angus. He adds that one of the key challenges for a game artist is to be able to adapt to a wide variety of genres and styles: "You have to constantly push yourself to learn new things and stay current."





### COLD FEAR

Two contrasting types of concept art created by Aleksi Briclot (pictured far left) for Cold Fear, a game developed by Darkworks for Ubisoft. This image provides stylistic pointers for level design, while the design on the far left was produced more to sum up the game's dynamic atmosphere and themes. "While they're not directly involved with game design itself, sometimes conceptual ideas change the game, inspiring the designers and in-game artists to add a new creature or environment," says Aleksi. "It's very much a back and forth process."



### SIEGE MACHINE

Another area of specialisation could be designing machinery, such as this piece by Doug Williams

platforms is ultimately required, lack of technical knowledge is rarely an issue at the outset. And while it's generally accepted that an artist will be handy with Photoshop as well as pen and paper, Jolyon says it's not even necessary for newcomers to be particularly adept at using the latest hot 2D or 3D packages. "Talent is the key," he says. "At Blitz Games, the underlying art philosophy is that we need people who are artists first and digital tools users second. If you understand form, colour, composition and lighting this knowledge of fundamental principals will stand you in good stead whatever the media you work in."

"The one quality we look for most is

## Proficiency in state-of-the-art software is of secondary importance to a solid background in traditional art

Daniel Docu

proven traditional art skills," agrees Daniel. "Proficiency in state-of-the-art software is of secondary importance to a solid background in traditional art."

What employers do look for, says Daniel, are well-rounded artists with a wide range of interests. Given that they can be called upon to develop ideas in any style or genre, concept design work isn't an area suitable for artists

Over at Raven Software, senior artist Glen Angus says that the company actively strives to give artists as much opportunity to contribute in different areas of game development as they want to. "Despite having set classifications of what your main area of expertise is, I think it's a good thing to also be able to get involved in other areas of art production," he says.

In fact, Glen's own role highlights how some studios favour a more generalised approach than that utilised at Blitz. During the course of game development on Marvel: Ultimate Heroes, his key role was actually texture creation, primarily working to define the look of each level in terms of surface materials and architectural elements.

### MARKET FORCES

For anybody considering a career as a concept artist in the games industry, the first thing to consider is the state of the job market. Jolyon Webb says artists looking for a break are likely to find things competitive: "It's fair to say that there are many more job applicants than there are positions available. That said, the games industry is always extremely keen to see good artists, and it's always expanding."

While some technical appreciation of target



## Top 10 Portfolio Tips



Glen Angus, senior artist at Raven Software, Activision, offers three golden rules to observe when creating a portfolio.

Top 3...  
continued



#### SIMPLY PERFECT

The concept designs for a lead character and vehicle, plus a more practical model sheet, were created by Aleksi Briclot for Ubisoft's *Splinter Cell: Double Agent*. "Every job is different," says Aleksi. "Sometimes I'll have just a few days to give a lead character a whole new look. Sometimes I'm asked to work on pre-production pictures that will help to sell or promote a game, sometimes I work with the 3D artists and sometimes I have to develop a whole universe."

**Exposure and contacts are really important, and with the internet it's really easy to connect with people**

Aleksi Briclot

With just one stylistic string to their bow. It's not suitable for prima donnas, either. While the job can offer a good amount of creative freedom, projects are designed with profits in mind. "You are just a small part of a huge process," says Aleksi. "You're not doing exactly what you want to, and sometimes will be asked to create designs you don't necessarily think are good for the project."

A talented artist who sits mute in the corner is no use to anyone. "The ability to communicate verbally, not just visually, is also paramount, as they'll need to interact with the whole design team," says Daniel.

#### VISUAL DYNAMITE

The challenge for newcomers looking to work in the games industry is that any time a studio advertises an opening they'll receive a good number of applications from more



Daniel Dociu's original concept art for the end boss in *Guild Wars Nightfall*, developed by NCsoft's ArenaNet studio. "Our concept artists often switch back and forth between traditional and digital media," says Daniel

#### With thanks to...

qualified artists. Yet Webb says this needn't be such a huge obstacle: "We always look at portfolios first when judging whether someone has potential to work on our games. People gain their first job on their talents as an artist, and so are not penalised for lack of experience. And while a degree does show you are serious and can be very helpful as you progress through a career, it's not absolutely essential. If you are 'visual dynamite' then that's really what we're after."

When it comes to putting together a portfolio, Webb says to keep things professional and to the point. And remember that the covering letter also contributes to the vital first impression. "Clean and simple is always the best way to go," says Webb. "When I see swooshes and Photoshop lens flares around the border of your pages, it's hard to take seriously."

As for getting that first foot in the door, there are two options: either find out what job positions are available, or put together a

portfolio or showreel and just get it out there. Job ads are placed in many of the finer video games publications, including *ImagineFX*'s own sister magazine, *Edge*. Websites such as [www.gamesindustry.biz](http://www.gamesindustry.biz) and [www.gamasutra.com](http://www.gamasutra.com) also host job ad sections.

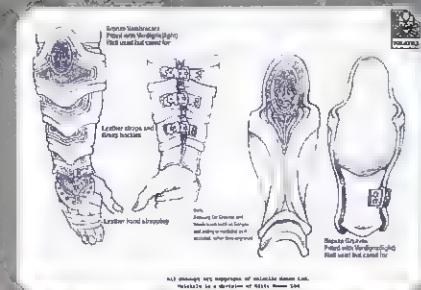
While waiting for a suitable ad to appear may sound like the sensible option, sending your work to other studios doesn't have to be the shot in the dark it appears. It pays to do your homework, finding out which development teams are on the rise, which are likely to be expanding soon and which are most likely to provide the best fit for your talents. Studios will, by and large, welcome unsolicited portfolios. It's unlikely to yield an instant job offer, but your work is likely to go on file for consideration when the studio is looking to take on a new artist.

As effective as unsolicited mailouts can be, it does also pay to make friends and influence people. "Exposure and contacts are really important, and with the internet it's really easy to connect with people and companies," says Aleksi. Become an active part of the community, chatting, critiquing and posting your own work at forums, such as the one at [www.imaginefx.com](http://www.imaginefx.com), as well as those at places such as [www.conceptart.org](http://www.conceptart.org), <http://forums.cgsociety.org/> and <http://cgchannel.com>. As well as raising your profile and receiving constructive criticism from peers you're all the more likely to get noticed by professionals in game studios.

Ultimately, if the quality of your work is good enough and it gets seen by the right people, then there's every chance of making it. And then the real work begins. ♦

# ALL HAIL THE EAGLE KING

"Concept work, particularly on a historical piece such as Eagle King, is the backbone of the creative process," says Jolyon Webb. "Many discussions were held and much research was conducted to ensure that the character in this demo was not only believable but was also one which a gamer would want to control."



Hand-drawn art showing armour detailing for the main character. "At Blitz the key 2D art tools are pencil and paper with a lot of work being started as a sketch," says Jolyon.

"In this case, we wanted the Eagle King character to be distinctive and highly detailed," says Jolyon. "So in addition to our usual concepting work, one of our artists made a clay model."

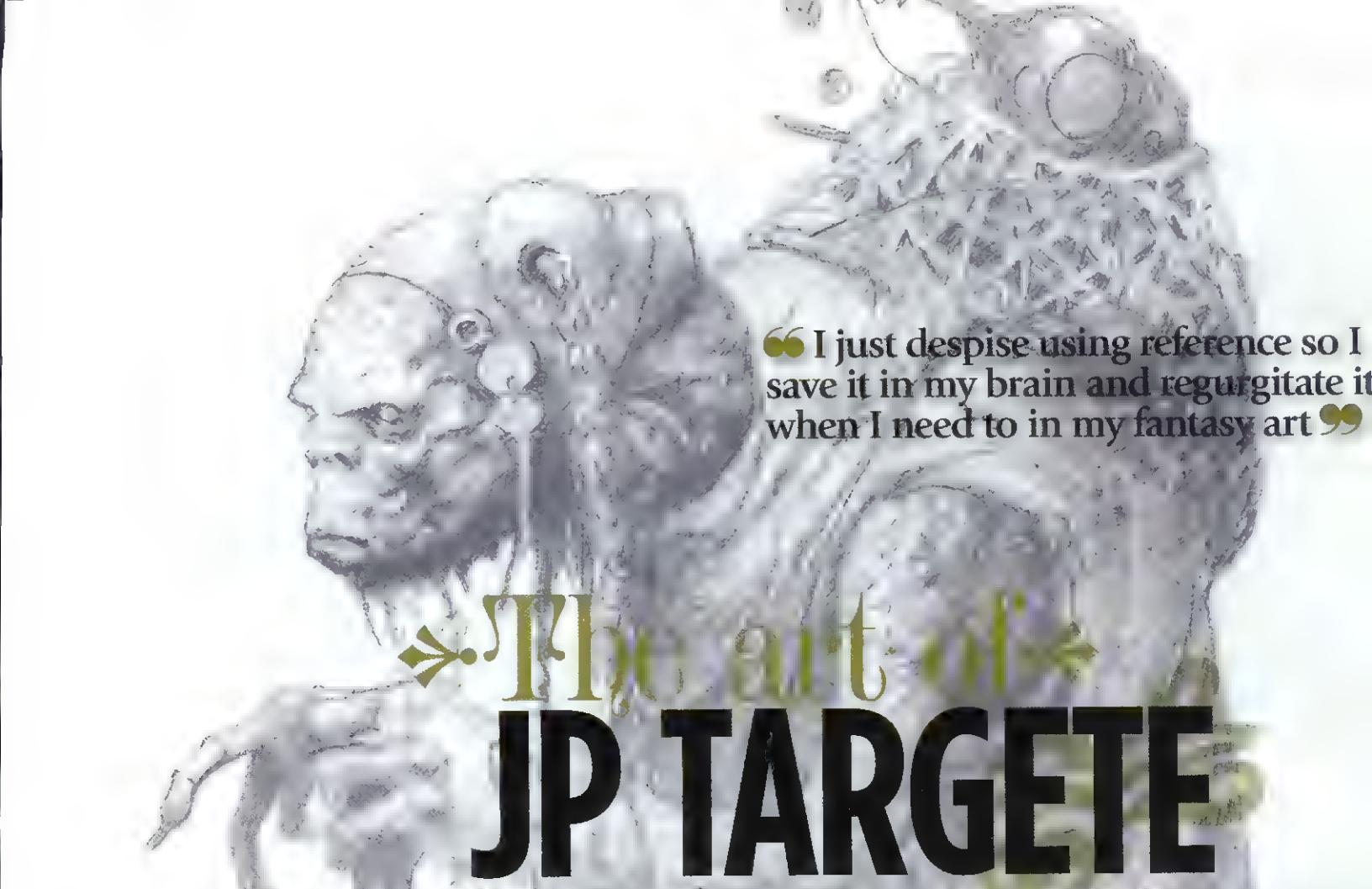


That clay model proved invaluable to the team when it came to the final finished demo. "That gave everyone a clear vision of what we were aiming for," says Jolyon. "When you see the quality of the visuals in the finished demo it's easy to see that this attention to detail really paid off."



© Yohka Games 2007





“I just despise using reference so I save it in my brain and regurgitate it when I need to in my fantasy art”

# JP TARGETE

He might live in the real world with the rest of us, but for JP Targete seeking out the spiritual enables him to be the storyteller he always wanted to become



MINOTAUR

*Critical to an artist's success is the ability to "tell the story from beginning to end with a single image."*



## REALITY CHECK

Sure enough, those times of detachment are when you produce great work – the pieces that define an artist and incidentally his chosen medium – but you have to keep your balance. So JP maintains one eye on the everyday: “I try to observe the real world with both a technical and physical mindset but also in an emotional and spiritual way.”

Given JP's aversion to the use of reference for his work, this kind of observation is central to his ability to create. Without it, he would have no raw material to work with: “I'm seeing the real world more as a giant library of sight and feeling,” he explains. ➤

o create successful fantasy art requires a very particular set of skills. Along with the obvious technical ability, an artist must be able to conjure not just the odd character or structure from imagination, but an entire world.

For the likes of NCSoft, Wizards of the Coast and Fantasy Flight Games, JP Targete journeys deep into his imagination, cuts off a large chunk of the netherworld and drags it kicking and screaming into this one. At least that's what it looks like goes into his art works.

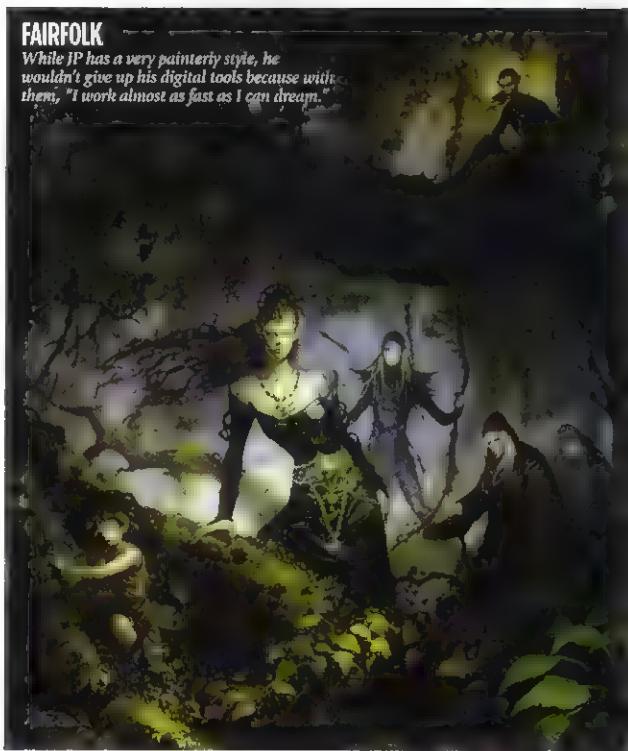
“It's extremely liberating working with fantastic themes,” says JP. But there's a risk inherent in anything that requires such a deep emersion: “It can detach you from reality at times.” And with that the netherworld theory takes a step closer to becoming fact.

**Artist PROFILE**

**JP Targete**  
AGE: 39  
COUNTRY: US  
JP is an accomplished digital and traditional illustrator, concept artist and art director for books and video games with 17 years experience. He has been doing illustration and concept art for book and RPG publishers, video games and production companies, and is presently working on a full colour sci-fi fantasy graphic novel. He currently resides in southern California with his wife and son.  
WEB: [www.targeteart.com](http://www.targeteart.com)

FAIRFOLK

While JP has a very painterly style, he wouldn't give up his digital tools because with them, "I work almost as fast as I can dream."



“School was great but it took me a while to break out into my own style. Don’t take your talent for granted and always follow your heart”



## GRAPHIC NOVEL

Finding your niche and sticking to it

TV, book  
fantasy  
zory or what a  
to find them  
direct

and po  
v will be

vision of my latest

TV working  
character design

develop



## GRAPHIC NOVEL

“I’m always a  
storyteller,” says JP  
He’s decided to explore  
his imaginings in  
graphic novel form.

JP is developing an image of the real world as a manual: “I store the technical information regarding light, form, texture, surface, colour in my mind, for later use in my imaginative stuff.” Drawn into effect during the creative process: “I’m able to bring realism and emotion to my fantasy works.”

## NATURAL BORN DRAWER

Born in New York, JP was raised in Miami, Florida. His father is an architect and so naturally, drawing became a part of his life. “I was always fascinated with drawing,” he notes, but despite the obviously strong influence of Targete senior’s technical drawing, “I was drawing more organic and character-driven type stuff.”

This shows a degree of wilfulness that helps to explain something of JP’s subsequent development into a fantasy artist. However, art school came first, and with it recognition of the youngster’s talent: “I studied illustration at the School of Visual Arts in Manhattan on a full scholarship.”

Back in New York, JP set to work, studying the old European masters and learning the business of illustration. But the old adage is

## SKETCH 043

JP shows with this sketch his amazing ability to capture life without use of reference.



The danger digital production presents to the artist is a subtle one. The availability of undo and cut ‘n’ paste creativity can lead to complacency. JP has remained alert to this, however, and uses a selection of techniques to ensure he stays fresh: “I easily tire of one process,” he declares, “because I’m always trying to find efficient or unique ways to create images.”

## IN THE MIX

Among the choices is the mix of digital to traditional: “One of the processes is I start off with an idea in my mind then do rough thumbnails with pencil. Once I have something I like I do a more worked up sketch.” This sketch, still fully traditional, is what the client will approve. Only then does production shift to the computer.

While this first approach mimics the traditional production route, at the opposite end of the spectrum, “I sometimes get an idea and just start painting digitally without a drawing or sketch; this is more intuitive and free form. The results can be unpredictable at times but also surprisingly good.”

Maintaining a flexible approach means you always have options. You can look at things from more than one angle.

That brings us neatly to the question of composition: “It’s one of the key essentials to doing the type of art that I do,” adds JP. In other words, composition comes before everything else if you are going to produce an image that engages the viewer on more than one level: “You only have one image to



JP MARGETTA

## ARTIST TIP

### KEEP ON DRAWING

Draw all the time. Carry a sketchbook at all times, take it to school, dinner, the toilet and even when you lay down to sleep – because if you're like me and have really sick dreams or nightmares, you'll want to quickly capture it in your sketchbook before you lose it forever.

# JP TARGETE

# ARTIST TIP

## BE YOURSELF

One of the things I try to tell up-and-coming fantasy illustrators or artists in general, is to be yourself. Don't mimic your heroes' art, or mimic their work ethics and successes, but their work. If you're going to do your own brand of fantasy art, do it like no other. Put your mark on the genre by being as raw and original as possible.



### DARK RIDERS

Despite his achievements, JP is always striving to do one piece he is totally happy with.

## DARK RIDERS

A film director allegedly once said: "A film is never finished, it's just abandoned. It has its own take on this painting is never abandoned wilfully, you just run out of time."

This isn't always a bad thing. Knowing when to stop working an image is difficult even for professionals. "However, sometimes deadlines lead to a lack of hesitation that helps create a happy little piece that someone will like."

So it was with Dark Riders, the image JP created for his Grimoire Workshop DVD. "It takes me from the beginning stages of my illustration process right through to the very final piece. This piece is epic, but JP remains cagey: "I think any of my art is great. In fact I'm always searching to do that one piece



### FANGATORIA

The key to success, says JP is never taking your talent for granted. That means practice, practice, practice!

» deliver a whole story, so the composition needs to invite the viewer in and hold them a while. Long enough to tell a story."

While that's easy to say, it's a skill that takes some development. "Composition is all about positioning and size relation along with the placement of key visual guides that lead the eye." If you're a master, "you can make the viewer look where you want them to, enabling you to tell the story from beginning to end with a single image."

### ALWAYS A STORYTELLER

All this from a man who started out painting the covers of romance novels. JP is willing to admit: "When I look back at it now it's pretty horrifying. I can't believe I actually did that type of work because my present work is so far from that right now."

At the moment, things seem to be going JP's way: "I'm a bum," he exclaims. Not literally swigging from half-bottles and sleeping in parks, more "freelancing for video game companies such as NCSoft and doing tons of RPG illustrations." This suits JP perfectly, "I enjoy the RPG publishing market. I find the content to be a lot looser in art direction than novels or video game art."

And when you feel your work, it's easier to produce something truly exiting. Or as JP puts it: "Dig deep inside and rip it out." Sounds painful but he's not in a joking mood: "Seriously. I try to do images as if I were a fan who just wanted to see something really different or powerful."

The artist in this case has a responsibility to his audience. "It's like when you go to a movie and you have certain expectations, so I try to be that fan with those high expectations." The goal is to live up to – or even exceed – those expectations. "If I disappoint myself then I feel I've let down everyone looking at the image."

All this bodes well for JP's future plans: "I want to make my own line of graphic novels and hopefully pitch them to film makers and video game makers." He adds, with admirable humility: "I'm rarely an artist but I'm always a storyteller."

## VITAL STATISTICS

Targete's life in a Q&A session...

### Full name

Jean Pierre Targete

### Date of birth

21 October 1967

### Favourite music?

Mostly soundtracks.

### Favourite traditional artist?

One's Peter Paul Rubens

### Do you consider yourself a well-organised person?

With my art yes, with taxes no

### Last book you read?

Paradise Lost, Philippe Girard

### Average time spent working on an image?

It varies greatly

### Super power you'd most like to have?



The power to clone myself so I could work on multiple projects simultaneously.

### What's the first image you remember being truly awestruck by?

A Boris Vallejo work with buff barbarians, half-naked women and some creatures attacking.

### The single most important piece of professional advice?

Believe in yourself

### Left or right-handed?

Right.

### Which historical figure would you most like to meet?

Toussaint Louverture, he lead the way to Haiti's road to independence from France.

Dig deep inside and rip it out. I try to do images as if I were a fan who just wanted to see something really different or powerful

### TRY IT OUT

## DARK PAINTING

JP Targete shows you how to create a dark fantasy painting by taking you step-by-step through his piece *The Purifiers*. From the

TURN  
TO PAGE  
**68**

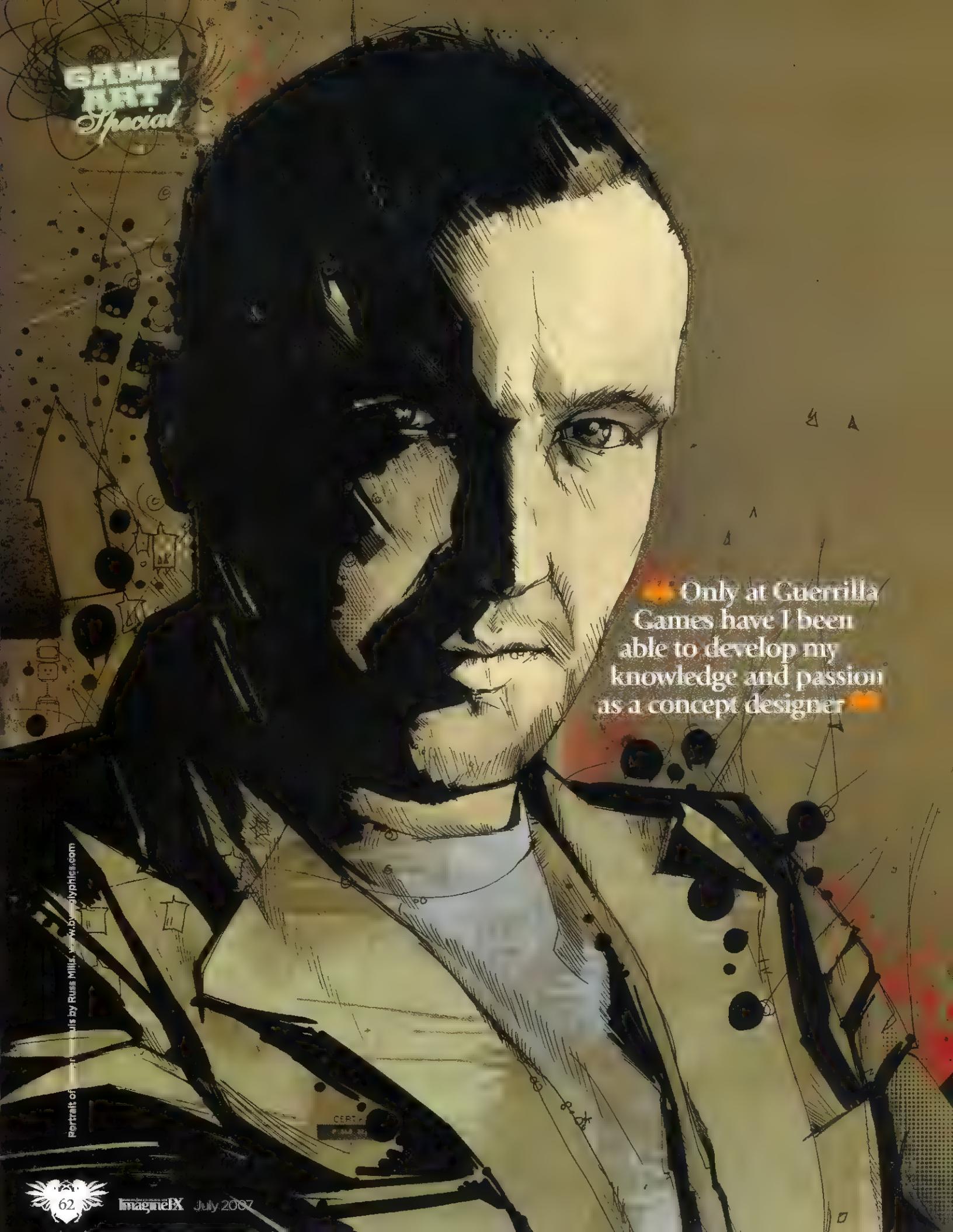


**FINAL POINT**

Working with fantastical elements is, says JP, "Extremely liberating." But it's important to keep a little perspective.

TARGETE  
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GRANDE  
ART  
Special



Only at Guerrilla Games have I been able to develop my knowledge and passion as a concept designer

Portrait of Russ Miller by Russ Miller, www.russmiller.com

Portrait of a Gunner

# XAVIER MARQUIS

The Guerrilla Games concept artist is happy to be a workaholic



Xavier Marquis is a games concept artist at Guerrilla Games, an Amsterdam-based company famous for Killzone, a sci-fi game series for Sony on both the PS2 and PSP. The next title is now being developed for PS3. Much of Xavier's personal artwork has obvious Japanese influences and is filled with rich textures and intriguing characters. His Killzone concept work and art for other games shares this richness and the definite sense that there's a story involved.

Self-taught in 3D and design, Xavier has no formal art training. 'I've never had the chance to receive serious graphical instruction,' he says, and goes on to explain that this has led him to experiment every day to develop and learn something new.

Nowadays, Xavier specialises in character creation. 'I focus on vehicles, environments and other items, but characters are always my centre of attention,' he says. 'I also feel an attraction for the 'epic' side of things – not so much a fascination for weapons or military themes, but instead a clear interest in historical events and places. Also strong, violent and dangerous situations that push people into becoming extraordinary.'

## SOLID INSPIRATION

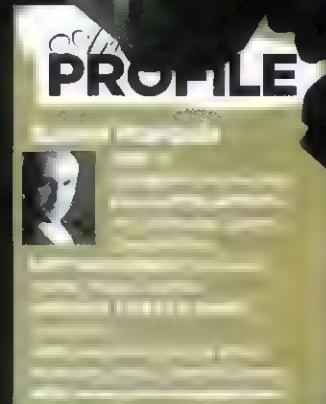
One of Xavier's favourite artists is Yoji Shinkawa (see page 114), of Metal Gear Solid fame. 'I always come back to his books, like

a sort of bible of inspiration,' Xavier explains. 'Yoji is a genius and adheres to my main philosophy regarding design: good design should be a 'cliché +1.' He explains. 'Design should be understandable, so the challenge is to find a good cliché, a common reference, and add one new idea to make it unique. I prefer developing only one strong idea per creation. Yoji knows how to do this, creating something totally new and amazing, but with around 90 per cent of his design based on common references.'

Xavier worked in web design, before moving into games in 2002. 'During this period I worked as a 3D environment artist for a motorbike game, but this experience had no real impact on my technique,' he says. 'Only at Guerrilla Games have I been able to develop my knowledge and passion as a concept designer.' Hired as a marketing artist, Xavier had to work hard to join the Killzone concept design team.

Working for a company, he is quick to explain, differs greatly from working on personal projects. 'When you're developing personal artwork, you don't have to have a precise vision in mind – everything

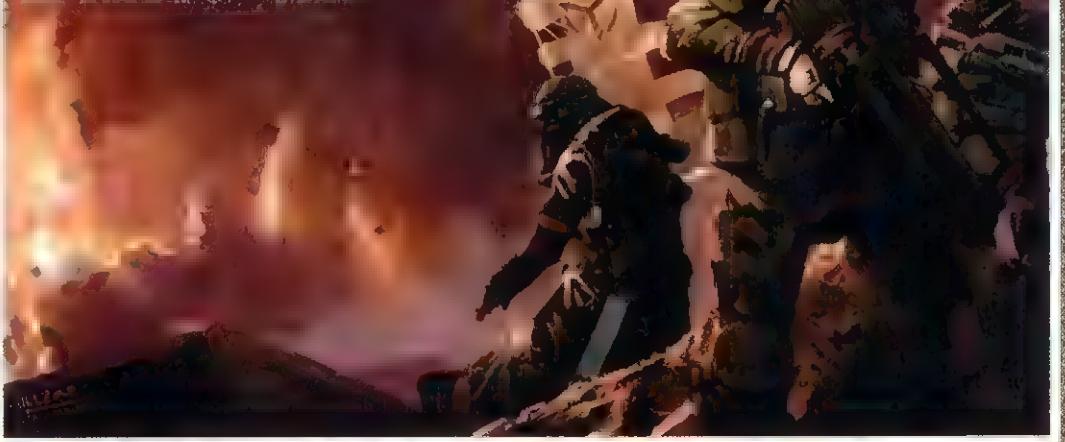
Xavier Marquis explains why



# XAVIER MARQUIS

## KILLZONE LIBERATION

"This is a picture created for the Killzone Liberation project and used as the basis for the title screen."



"You can change and it's only your time and your patience that are affected. In a company it's totally different, you almost have to be able to schedule your creativity," he says. "The latest tendency in the concept design world is to create a concept 'in media res' – basically this means that the artwork requires a strong composition, mood and lighting that immediately catches the viewer's attention and resembles the potential end result as closely as possible."

Of course, when you're working as part of a team, you also have to convince everyone else involved of your ideas – from fellow

## SCOUTS

*This depicts a skirmish group, concealed in a forest during the winter. It includes a snowy environment, a uniformed faction and a flag. Created in Photoshop, the clothes are designed from a different influences, including Samurai armour, and Scottish tartans and kilts.*

artists to programmers and those holding the purse strings. "The main challenge is to create something unexpected and surprise people," says Xavier. "I feel extremely happy when I can see my concepts recognised and identified by people working around me."

Xavier's favourite software is Photoshop, using custom brushes. He also uses 3ds max and Maya to create the correct perspective when painting environments, and his work is now almost exclusively digital. "In the past I always made an early sketch in black ink, then scanned it and coloured it using layers in Photoshop," he explains. "Nowadays, I

I feel extremely happy when I can see my concepts recognised and identified by people working around me

mainly paint directly into the computer and use as few layers as possible.

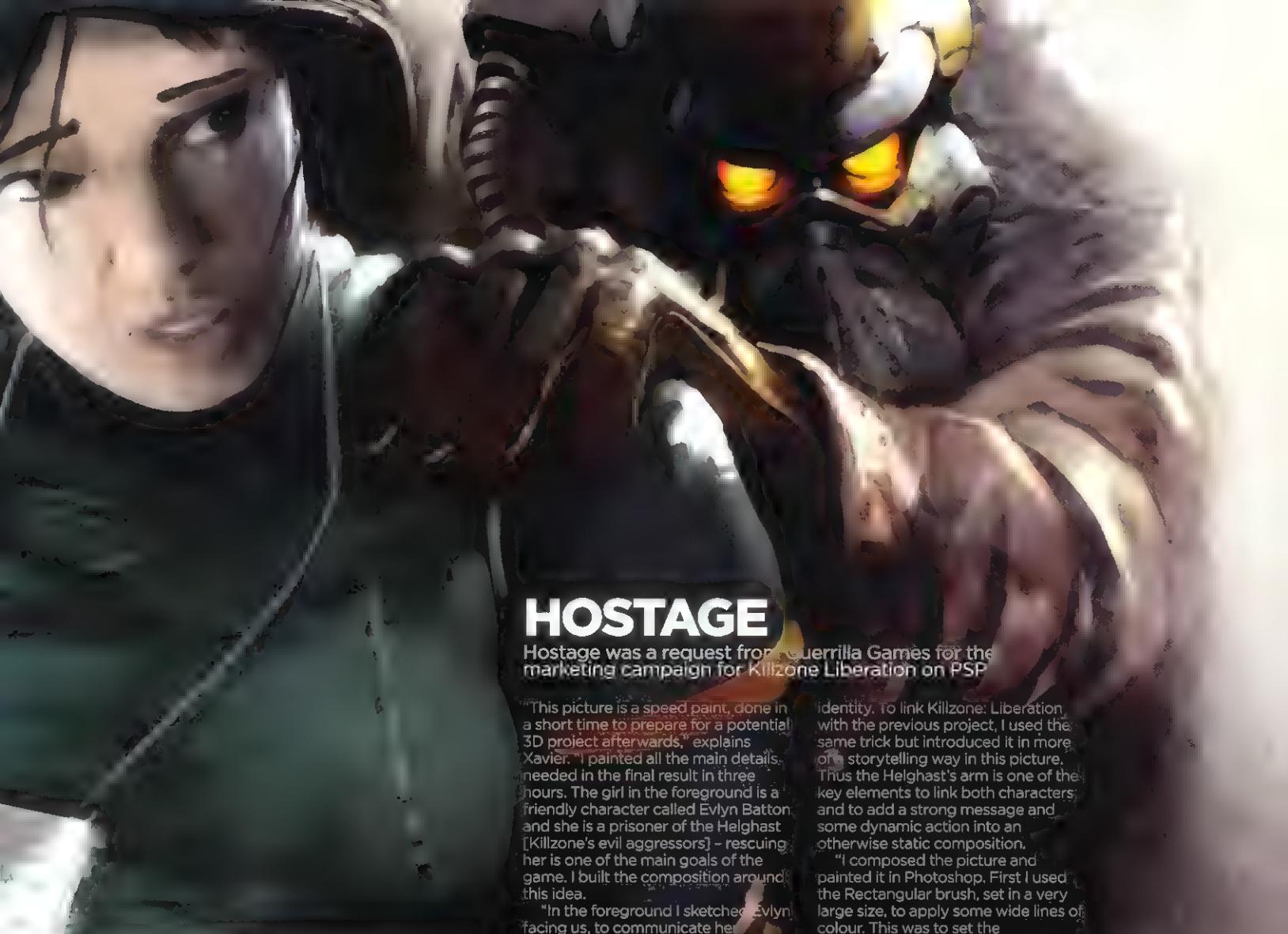
The pressure of work at Guerrilla Games means Xavier now finds it hard to put in the hours for personal work, but he doesn't seem to mind that much. "It's a shame, but since I've become a concept designer I work full time on my job," he says. "Wherever I am, I'm always thinking about my professional projects. When I was a 3D modeller, I worked on my personal projects every evening, because my day job didn't involve me in the creative process. Now as a concept designer, I find my personal artistic goals are so close to my professional goals that I prefer to focus all my energy into the work projects."



## THE THIRD BRIGADE

*"A picture for my son based on The Third Brigade by Robert K. Green."*





## HOSTAGE

Hostage was a request from Guerrilla Games for the marketing campaign for Killzone Liberation on PSP

"This picture is a speed paint, done in a short time to prepare for a potential 3D project afterwards," explains Xavier. "I painted all the main details needed in the final result in three hours. The girl in the foreground is a friendly character called Evelyn Batton and she is a prisoner of the Helghast [Killzone's evil aggressors] - rescuing her is one of the main goals of the game. I built the composition around this idea."

"In the foreground I sketched Evelyn facing us, to communicate her identity clearly. Static, and lit on two sides, she has to be recognisable. Then I placed the Helghast behind her. Killzone on the PS2 had a clear marketing campaign largely based on the use of the Helghast helmet."

identity. To link Killzone: Liberation with the previous project, I used the same trick but introduced it in more of a storytelling way in this picture. Thus the Helghast's arm is one of the key elements to link both characters, and to add a strong message and some dynamic action into an otherwise static composition.

"I composed the picture and painted it in Photoshop. First I used the Rectangular brush, set in a very large size, to apply some wide lines of colour. This was to set the atmosphere and the direction of the light source. Then step-by-step, I reduced the brush sizes to define the details. Finally I added a spot of Dodge Tool, set in Highlight mode, to draw in the reflections."



### PANZERABBIT

"This is a small research project I worked on just for training purposes in Photoshop. I had in mind a world similar to that of the Japanese comic *Another World War* for the concept."



### UN FIGHTER POUR ALBATOR

"When I was kid, I was fan of an anime called Albator, or Captain Harlock. I did this picture. It depicts a variant of the fighter from the series."

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FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

# ImagineFX Workshops

This month's tips and techniques...



## 68 Bring The Purifier to life, if you dare

JP Targete introduces us to his unforgiving friend, and shows you how to paint him



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### 68 Journey into dark fantasy painting

Introduce elements of reality into your paintings to make them more mysterious, with JP Targete

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Christian Bravery divulges his concept art techniques

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Follow photo-montage tricks in Photoshop, with Thomas Scholes

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Katarina Sokolova has essential advice on how to paint noses

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Unmissable advice for budding concept artists from Francis Tsai

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This first instalment from Marta Dahlig focuses on skin and hair

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Video game character concepts, Andrew Jones style



# Workshops



# Photoshop JOURNEY INTO DARK FANTASY PAINTING

**JP Targete** shows you how to create a dark fantasy painting by taking you step-by-step through his piece The Purifier

**Artist PROFILE**

**JP Targete**  
COUNTRY: US  
CLIENTS: NCSoft, The Gnomon Workshop, Wizards of The Coast

JP is an accomplished digital and traditional illustrator, concept artist and art director for books and video games with 17 years experience. He's been providing illustration and concept art for book and RPG publishers, video games and production companies, and is presently working on a full-colour graphic novel. He currently resides in southern California with his wife and son. [www.targeteart.com](http://www.targeteart.com)

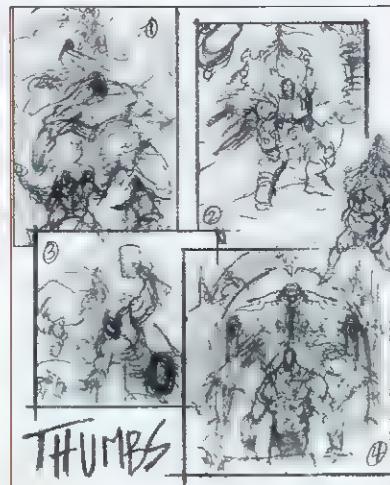
**DVD Assets**  
Screenshots and the files you need are on your DVD.  
FOLDERS: Workshop Files, Screenshots  
SOFTWARE: Photoshop CS2 (demo)

**W**hat's the difference between dark fantasy and regular old fantasy, you might ask. Well, it's not the obvious, which is, it doesn't actually have to be a literally dark image or have a muted colour palette. It does, however, require a sense of mystery, obscurity or a threatening mood of pending or present fear visualised in the image. What makes dark fantasy art distinct is that it introduces an element of reality to the viewer's visual experience that is different than the typical fantasy. It should appeal to them or make them feel uneasy. Let's face it, many of us like to be scared or surprised and dark fantasy should do this.

So when I was asked to host a workshop, I chose my favourite genre: dark fantasy. I find it interesting and enjoyable to play with, and it keeps me engrossed from start to finish. I enjoy simplicity in concept and idea, but I love all the technical details and processes needed to give life to those ideas too.

In this workshop, I'll start with a simple idea in thumbnail form and develop it into a drawing that we'll evolve into a fully detailed, coloured illustration using Photoshop CS2. There is more than one technique and tool in Photoshop to get the results we want.

I'll go over the techniques and tools I use, as well as discussing the ideas and concepts behind The Purifier. We'll also look at painting, colour, lighting, surface materials and detailing. This workshop is for artists who have a basic to good understanding of Photoshop.



## 1 Birth of an idea

For this first step I use pencil and paper and start sketching to fuel my ideas. When I first start sketching I don't have a clear idea of what I want to draw, all I know is that I want to create a powerful character either in battle or just standing in an 'I'll kick your ass' pose. As I continue to sketch, I find myself straying away from the more action-orientated thumbnails because I've done many battle-type paintings in the past.

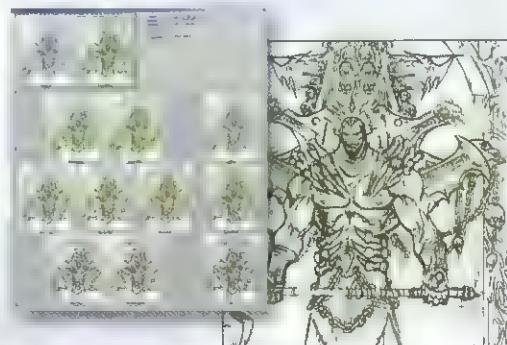
I choose to do the more iconic posed character in sketch four, above – the character holding the axe. This will enable me to focus on the single character, details and background decor.

## 2 Develop a line drawing

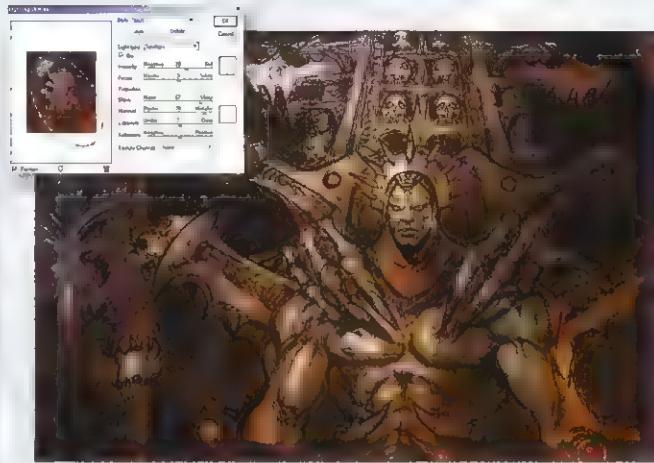
I take my raw thumbnail and develop it into a line drawing. I then scan it at about 10x13 inches at 200dpi and tweak it in Photoshop. Try to get as much detail in the shapes and anatomy at this stage because it will save you a lot of grief later on. The Purifier is a cursed lord from the underworld who travels between our world and his. He purifies people through pain and eventually death, enabling their souls to be set free and collected. The object on his back is a dark magic soul-collecting mechanism.

## 3 Colourise your line art

Colourising will merge your line art with your painting, and the coloured line can be easier to deal with than the black and white line when it comes to painting over it. There are several ways to colourise, one is using the Variations function under Image>Adjust. Here you can see variations of your image and change the colour of the overall image quickly by clicking the desired colour. ➤



# Workshops



## 4 Lay a ground colour

As I mentioned in step two, your line work should be bold and clear because you will now use it as a top layer and lay a colour ground underneath it in another layer. So create another layer under your line drawing. Change the layer setting of your line drawing to Multiply, and go back to the layer underneath. Go to your RGB colour slider and set it to this: R 110, G 102, B 117. Take the Paint Bucket tool in the toolbar and click into the empty layer. This is to create a colour and value ground that we will add highlights and shadows to.

## 5 Filters are your friends

Many artists don't like using filters in their work, which is fine, but I like to use as many as I can. My favourite filter is the Grain filter, found in the Filters menu under Texture>Grain. By adding texture to your ground layer you will simulate real media, such as paper or a grainy painting surface. Settings in the Grain filter should be set to Grain Type Clumped, with an Intensity of 39 and Contrast of 50. The filter will add small, coloured grainy particles to your image, which will help it to look more natural.



## 6 The mighty Dodge tool

The Dodge tool gets a bad rap in Photoshop because many users tend to misuse it, making it obvious that the tool was used in the image. If used properly, Dodge is a powerful tool. Here I use the Dodge tool to add highlights to my ground colour. This is similar to adding white chalk on grey paper. The Dodge tool does not erase or paint over the grain texture, so the texture stays intact as I add highlights. This is known as 'backward painting', because in art school we are taught to start with our darks and shadows first and finish up with highlights. I find the backward method easier for me when I put in basic highlights. It's important to know what direction your lighting will be coming from, and from how many light sources.

## 7 Adding darker values

Now that I have my highlights, I can start to add shadows and some values to my ground colour. I like to use the pre-made Oil brush in Photoshop. It's not as smooth as the regular Round brush, but not as hard as the Pencil or Hard brush. I set the brush setting to Darken and apply dark colours like markers, keeping areas somewhat translucent. I try to work very quickly in this step and really focus on shadows, values and form.

## PRO SECRETS

### Thumbs up

One of the key points in the thumbnail step is to do as many as you can and keep them loose, focusing really on composition and power. Lighting, rendering and so on should be minimal at this stage. Thumbs and sketches are the essentials to creating a finished illustration.

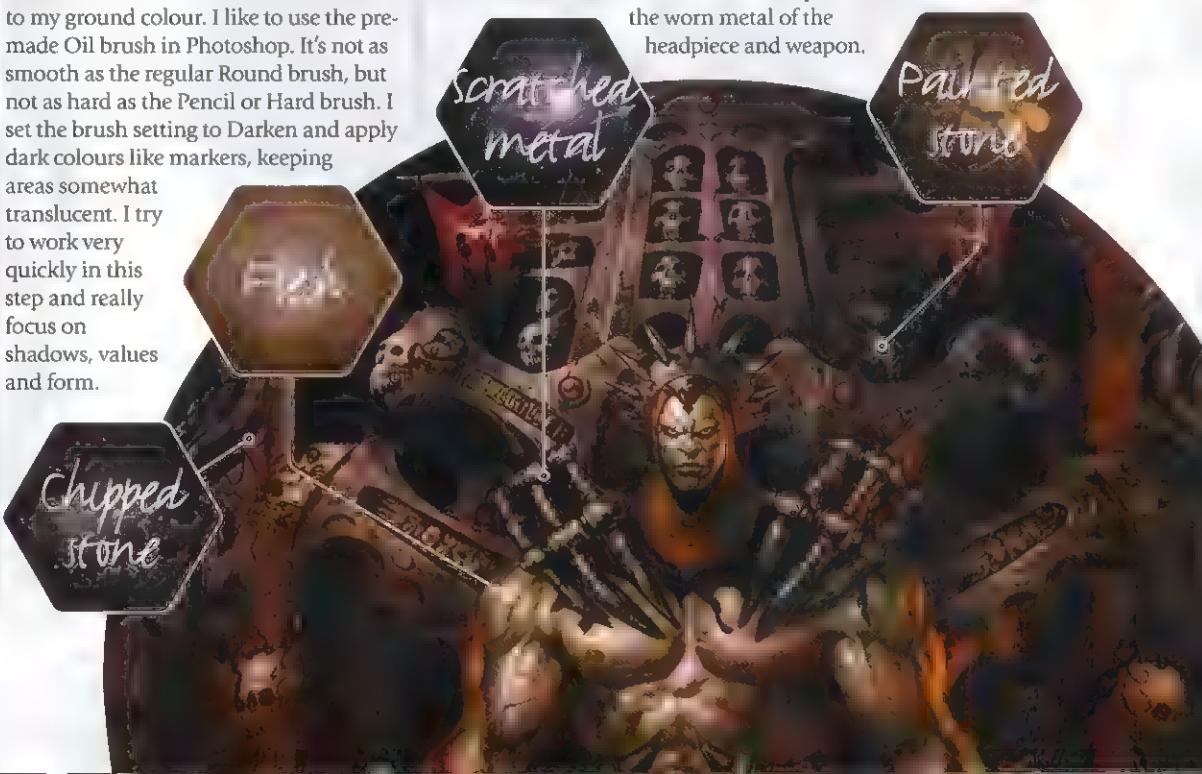
## 8 Apply the Lighting Effects filter

The Lighting Effects filter under Filter>Render is extremely useful for painting in Photoshop. It should be used to help establish quick, broad lighting and colour set-up in your image. I've set up a cream-coloured spotlight for my main light source and two omni red/orange lights for my edge and background light source, which represent flames. By previewing your image you can move the lighting around and see how it affects your image.

## 9 Establishing your surface materials

Before we continue it is important to establish the surface materials of the elements in the painting. If a viewer cannot distinguish flesh from stone or metal in your work, your image is getting further away from realism. Just like a 3D modeller who will create for their 3D renderings, a 2D artist needs to establish a materials library. For The Purifier, there are four main surface materials: chipped, painted stone of the arch decor, the character's flesh tone, the carved stone of his back piece and

the worn metal of the headpiece and weapon.



# In depth Journey into dark fantasy painting



## 10 Merge layers, start painting

Once you know what materials go where you can merge your drawing and ground layers and start painting on top of that layer or on a new layer. I roughly start to paint with my oils and Soft brush with warm colours. Notice how some of the ground colour is showing through.

## 11 Blocking in the background

Painting more transparently, I roughly block in the background, leaving bits of the ground colour to show through. I paint in the flames very quickly; they'll be refined later on. I've also started rendering the character's back piece, keeping in mind the materials it's made out of and how light will affect it.



## 12 Love your skulls

As I continue painting I get carried away with painting the skulls. There's nothing so raw and primordial as a skull of an animal or human. It's this basic, visual chunk of reality that seeps into dark fantasy that makes it so appealing to me.



## 13 Back to the background

I go back and forth from background to foreground and middle ground many times. In this step, I work up the right arch decor and the flames a little more, keeping in mind the material they're made of. I also flesh out the character's lower body. Notice the difference in materials from the cloth below his waist and the metal piece on his abdomen.

## PRO SECRETS

### Material world

Mastering surface materials in painting is a key component that will help you develop a believable world. The greatest mistake that many aspiring painters make is that they do not have a wide range of established materials in their paintings. Many objects in the image, from flesh to leather to metal, seem to have the same specular properties. Once an artist has control of surface materials, the possibilities of application are endless.

## 14 Arch headpiece

For the arch centre headpiece I want three degrees of light: ambient lighting that shows the form, a dominant

main light source and secondary under-lighting emitting from the bottom flame. For the left side of the arch decor I copy and flip the right side and repaint it with the proper lighting.

## 15 Texturing the arch

Using a custom-made Texture brush I add small speckles to the arch's surface, which adds a realistic, stone-like texture to it.



# Workshops



## 16 Add smoke

On a separate layer I paint smoke in the background with a custom Cloud brush I created. This brush serves many purposes, from clouds to smoke and fog.



## 17 Erasing areas of smoke

With the Eraser tool I carefully erase the smoke areas where I want to show the foreground elements in the layer beneath.

## 18 Unsharp Mask

After applying final touches, I use the Unsharp Mask filter (under Filters->Sharpen->Unsharp) to bring out some of the details of the painting. Always create a duplicate layer of the layer you want to apply the filter to, because you can always erase parts you don't want.



## 19 The promised land

After looking at the image I realise I painted it literally too dark, and I need to pump up the highlights in certain areas. I use the level sliders under Image->Adjustments->Levels and my friend the Dodge tool to bring out the highlights. And so The Purifier is finished. But his reign of terror lives on... ☠



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**UK READERS PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 29**

# Workshops



Photoshop

# VIDEO GAME CONCEPT ART

Black & White 2 Art Director **Christian Bravery** reveals his image creation secrets...

## Artist PROFILE

### Christian Bravery

COUNTRY: UK

CLIENTS:

EA Canada, EA Criterion, SCEA, SCEI, Kung Fu Entertainment, Microsoft, Stormfront, Lionhead Studios



Christian worked for several years at Lionhead Studios, being involved with titles including Black & White 2. Since leaving Lionhead, he has set up Leading Light Conceptual Design and created concept art and design solutions for several companies. URL: [www.leadinglightdesign.com](http://www.leadinglightdesign.com)

### DVD Assets

The files you need are on the DVD

FOLDERS: Screenshots

SOFTWARE: Photoshop CS2 (demo)

**L**et me tell you about the thought processes that went into creating this piece of concept art. Much of what we'll discuss is applicable to any example of conceptual art, while some of it will be specific to this design. Taken as a whole it'll offer insight into how the process might be approached.

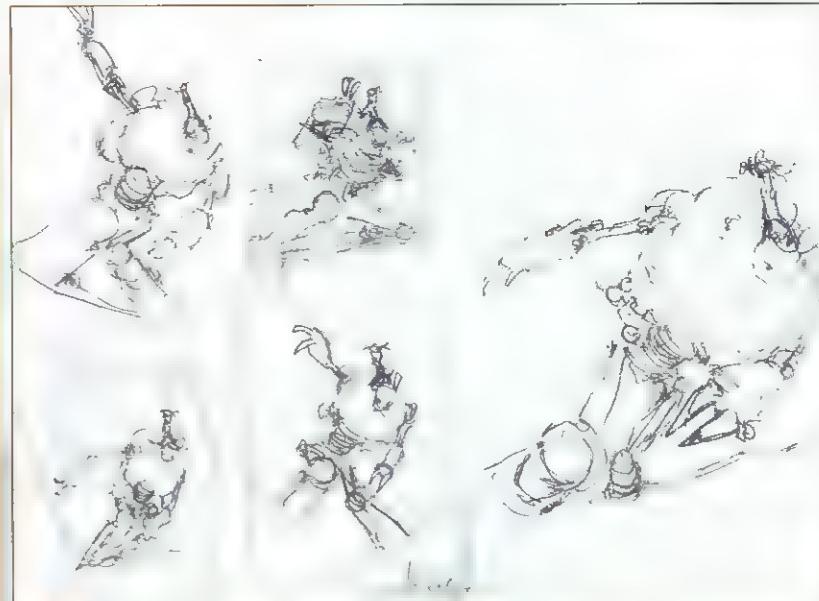
So let's set aside the image at hand here for a brief moment, and talk about what happens before we fire up Photoshop and grab the Wacom pen.

A concept artist will usually receive a brief specific to the job at hand. The accuracy of this can vary widely but it's really up to you to try to get the most out of whoever is directing you. If the brief is detailed, fabulous – you can launch into it with gusto. But if it's vague then it's down to you to at least try to clarify it with the art director.

The only brief here was to create a workshop piece, so I could do pretty much whatever I pleased. I wanted to produce something that would encompass character and environment visualisation, coupled with elements of action and narrative.

I chose some mainstream sci-fi subject matter: a giant robot in a ruined cityscape with our hero winning through against terrible odds. Archetypal stuff, but fun to paint and the kind of action shot that publishers always love.

I always start with a pencil sketch. There's no substitute for good old pencil and paper for quickly realising ideas and getting things going.



## Quick sketches

In the shot I have in mind, our hero will have defeated his enormous adversary; I want him tearing the electronic brains from a gargantuan robot. The important thing at this early stage is to convey this moment and some of the story behind it through a series of sketches. The robot monster has been terminated by our hero, so its pose is limp, he's off balance and is in the process of falling to the ground in defeat. Our hero, on the other hand, is alive with tension, heaving the robot's brain aloft in a triumphant victory pose that clearly completes this simple narrative.

## Evolution

After working through some quick drawings, I eventually settle on the one that's closest to my vision, and the brief of course. Some people like to refine the drawing before they start painting, but I'd rather refine as I go. I like the creative process to be an ongoing evolution, rather than a step-by-step process. I learn more about the image as it progresses, and it tells me what it needs as I go. Speed is also an important factor, and as this is a painting – in which pretty much all the drawing will eventually be hidden – I won't waste time working on something that will never be seen.

# Workshops

## 1 Perspective broken

I'm breaking all sorts of perspective rules here: I want to have the looming robot and our hero in shot and easy to make out, so correct perspective has to take a back seat for the time being. If this shot was an environment concept, proper perspective would be top of the list, but in this case it's less crucial.

## 2 Underpainting

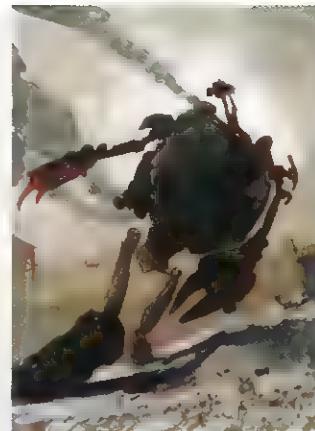
I scan the sketch and open it in Photoshop. The next step is the underpainting, for which I've chosen a bright, rusty orange. As I develop the image further I let some of the orange colour bleed through in the borders between painted elements. This gives a certain 'pop' appearance to the overall shot. Over the orange ground I add noise with some scattered FX brushes to break up the flat area and add interest and some colour multiplicity.



## 3 Begin blocking

Next, using a Hard Round brush with pressure-sensitive opacity (tick Other Effects in the Brushes window), I block out the image. Here I'm thinking chiefly about the value composition – the juxtaposition of light, dark and mid-tone areas. The aim here is to present the image as clearly as possible, defining the elements and their relationships within the overall design.

Naturally, I create the most contrast around the victorious figure of the hero standing on the robot's head, which will help to draw the viewer's eye towards the centrepiece of the image. I've opted for a pretty basic red/green complementary palette: warm, lit areas being predominantly red; cool, shaded areas being mostly green. Think of this as a rule of thumb, rather than the law. Equally, you can have warm greens and cool reds if the situation requires it.



## 4 Let there be light

I want the main light source positioned to the left of the group, out of shot. I'm starting to think it's going to be a near-sunset shot, like a low winter sun that strikes the left-facing surfaces with direct light. That's where I'm going to put my brightest highlights, but not just yet. First I'm going to start modelling some of the shapes in the lit area of the robot, his right shoulder and arm, adding some detail here and there but not getting carried away. It's important to always work on the image as a whole, not concentrating on any specific area, gradually bringing the whole image into focus.

## 5 Brightening up

At this point I decide the image is looking too drab, I want more saturated colour. So using Curves I tweak the RGB values separately, increasing the dominance of the green and to a lesser extent the red channels until I'm satisfied with the result. The image is now predominantly green, and the orange underpainting is popping through the edges and adding depth to the colour range. We'll work to enhance this further as we go.



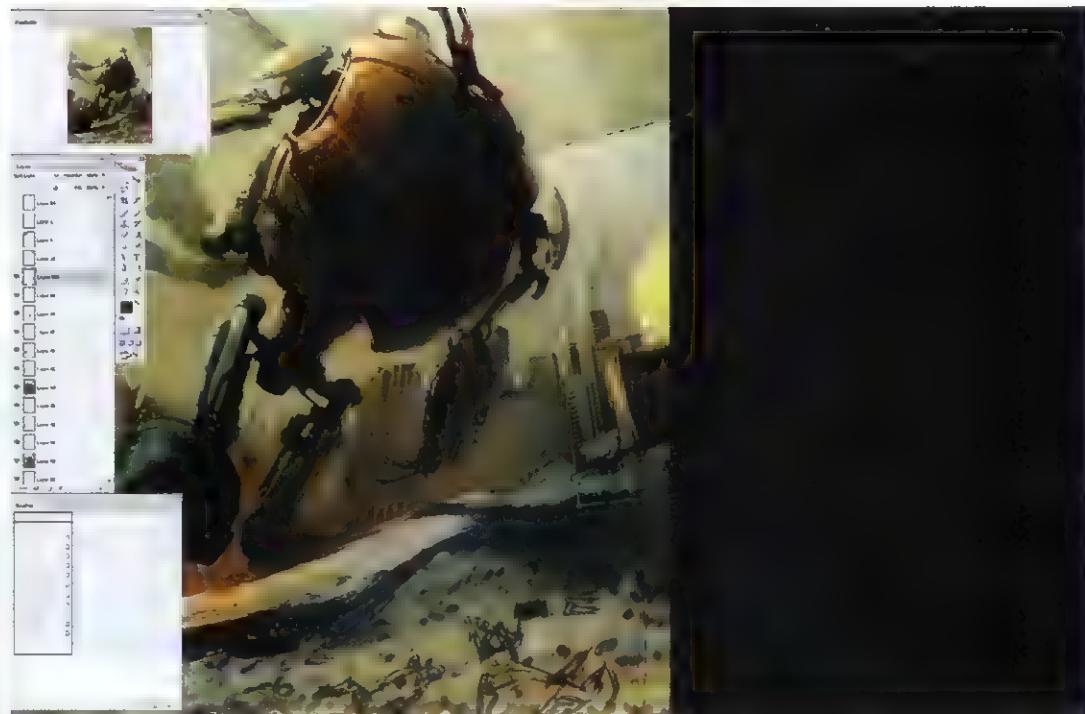
## Background

It's time to pay some attention to the background elements. I use Quick Mask to protect the work that's been done on the robot. This way I can continue to use loose strokes to block out the background cityscape without needing to be too careful. Generally, I don't use masks very often; I like colour and tone to bleed from one element to another, avoiding crude divisions except where a hard divide supports the vision.



## City building

I quickly add a series of vanishing lines on a separate layer to block out the cityscape in the background. Sticking in general to the red/green palette, I paint in the buildings – again keeping it loose – using low chroma green for the shadows and warm orange for the lit faces. I've also added noise and colour multiplicity to the sky using some scattered FX brushes that give a stippled effect.



## Adding texture

We're going to use a bit of photo manipulation to add texture to the buildings. Using some images of buildings I found online, I take them into Photoshop and paste them into the image, setting the layer to Soft Light or Overlay (try them both, see which one suits the situation). I then position them over the buildings. Using Free Transform I resize, distort, rotate and flip them and finally erase the unwanted parts till they fit, working through each building or group in turn, painting here and there on a new layer to get them to sit comfortably in the image. Remember you want your most important area, the star of the image, to have the highest value and chroma contrast. So make sure your background elements don't start to take control and keep them as subtle as you can.



## Composition correction

Taking a step back and flipping the image (always a useful thing to do), I notice that the composition is awry. It's too bottom-heavy and it feels like it's slanting to the right – it just generally seems a bit awkward. The solution is to add the huge, smoking guns, which instantly help to add dark weight to the upper portion and give contrasting diagonals that help balance the feel of the shot. Not only that, but big guns are pretty damn cool. I've been careful to leave them as loose as I can, as I absolutely don't want them to draw the eye away from our hero.

I've also gone in at this point and painted the head of the robot. You'll notice that the bright lit areas are balanced now by a cool blue/green bounce light on the lower right side of the forms. This enables me to model the forms in shadow and helps make everything feel much more solid.

# Workshops



## PRO SECRETS



### Sharpening up

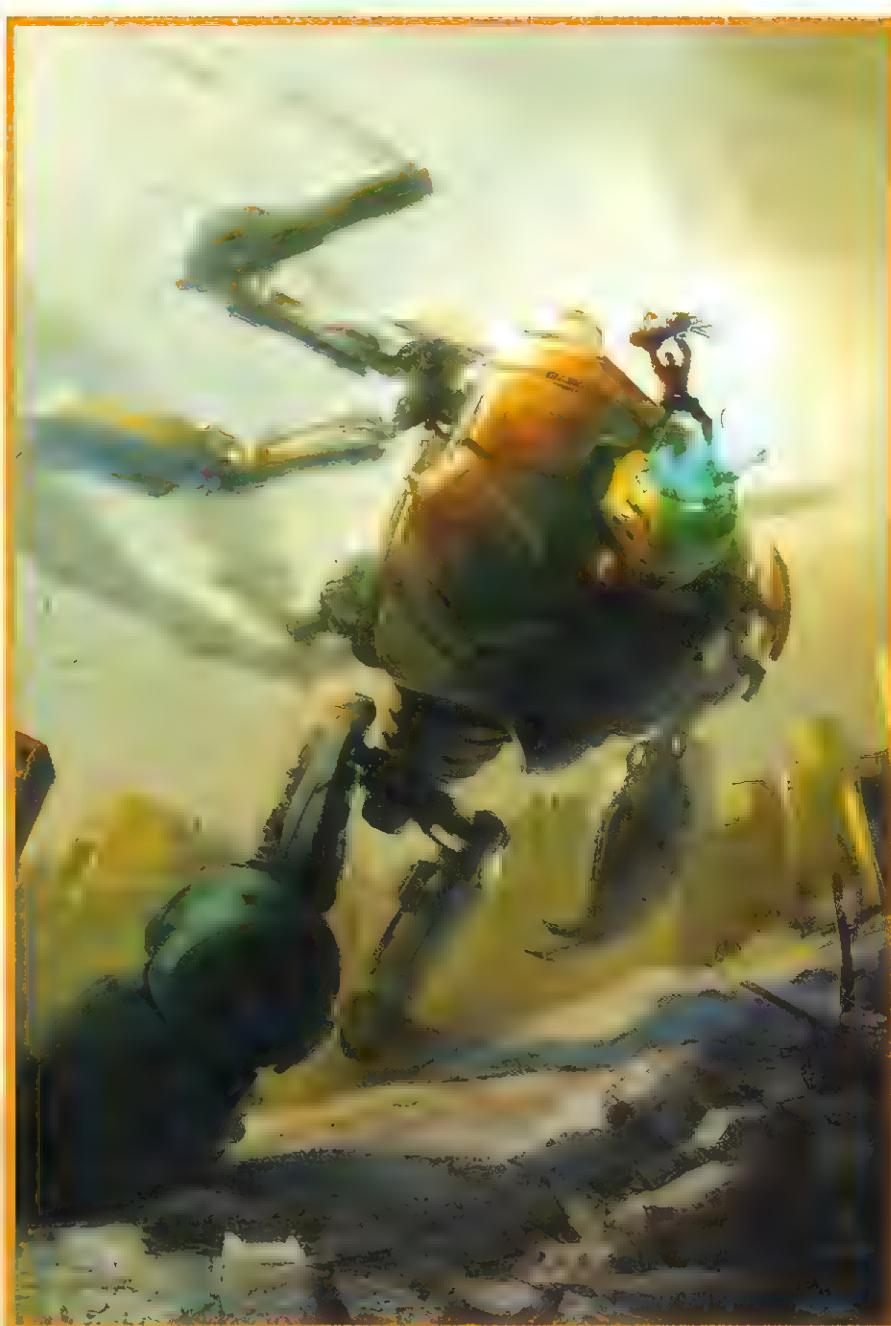
Next I add some foreground detail, using a combination of the techniques already outlined: loose blocking-out of forms and laying in the areas of light and shadow, adding some photo texture on Overlay and repainting additional detail over that, before finishing with a dusting of scattered rich colours to soften and connect it all. At this point I like to sharpen the image using Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask. To do this I make a copy of the complete image then paste it back into my file. Now I sharpen the new copy layer, playing with the settings to see what works. Personally I like a very sharp image, unless there's a lot of fast movement in the shot where some blurring might take preference.

### Electric shock

We're getting close now! Next up I add the FX that forms the centrepiece to the shot, the electrical charge as the computer brain is ripped from the robot's head. I set a new layer to Colour Dodge and paint in the blue/green charge using bright yellow – this will make sense when you try it. I also detail the figure of the hero very simply, just adding light to create the form; orange from the main light source on the left side and blue from the electricity at his feet.

### Implied brain detail

Again, I add a few extra bits of photo texture here and there. This one is from some holiday snaps of Cape Kennedy – it's part of a rocket and bits of it will be great for adding some implied detail to the robot's brain and shoulder. Paste the photo into a new layer, set it to Soft Light and play with Free Transform, erasing what's not needed.



### Finishing tweaks

I collapse the image and make a copy of the layer, set the top one to Screen at 15-20 per cent opacity, then give it some motion blur angled from top left to bottom right. This subtly implies movement and also helps to soften the image. I erase this layer here and there – in the foreground and also parts of the sky where the softening effect is removing detail.

Finally, I merge the screen layer down, then using the Polygonal Lasso tool I select an area around the hero and the head of the robot, not getting too close to either. Now I feather it (Select>Feather) setting the range to 200 pixels. I go to Curves and ramp the contrast up judiciously, creating an 'S' curve by dragging the light section of the line up and the dark section down, making sure to be subtle. What I'm looking for is more contrast in this area without being too obvious about it. Lastly, still in Curves, I go to the red channel and ramp that up a tad. I merge that all down and we're done.



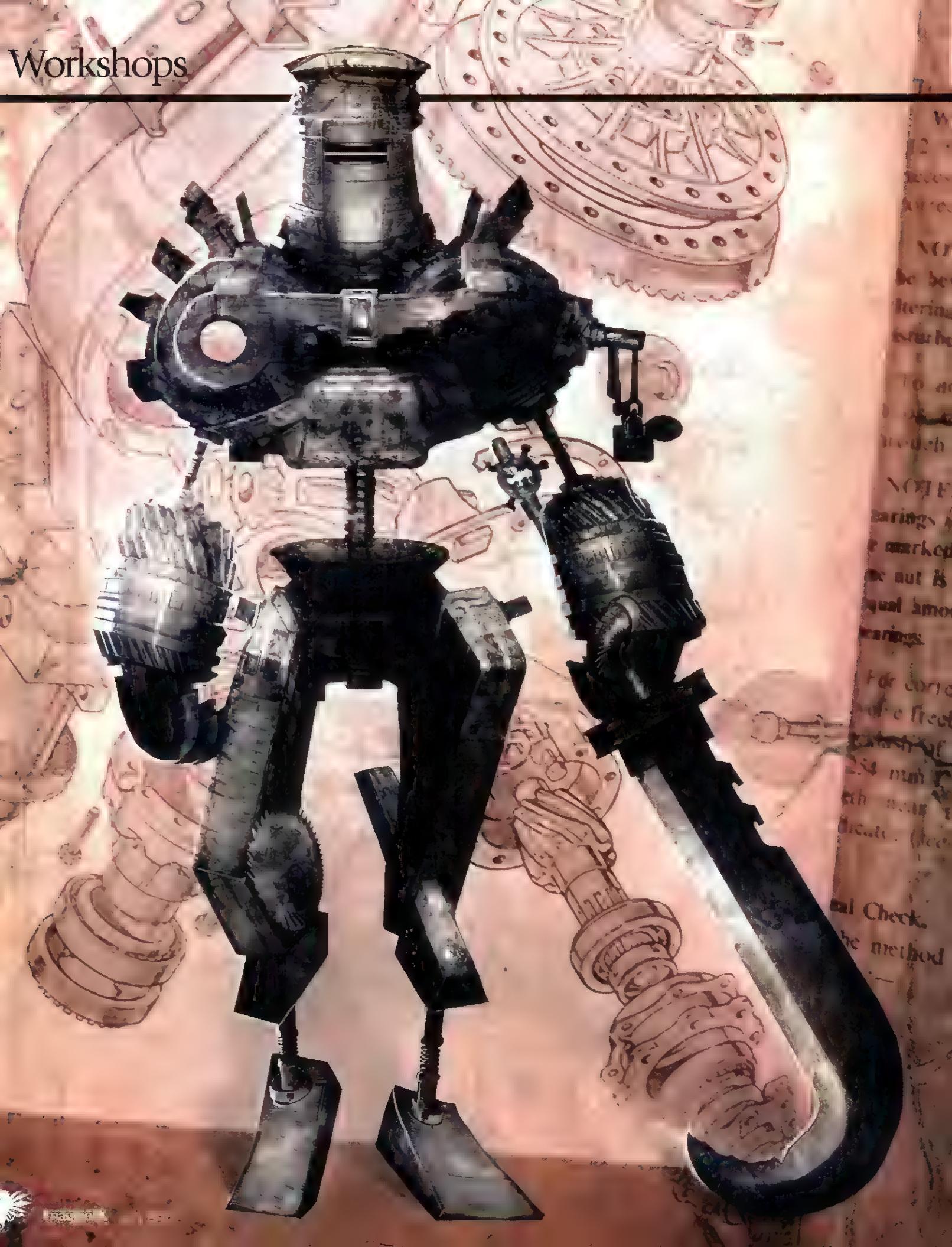
We've just signed our biggest ever next-gen project with a major publisher and we're looking for passionate and talented staff to join the team and help us make it happen.

So if you want to be part of a well-established developer who's really going places then contact us today at [jobs@BlitzGames.com](mailto:jobs@BlitzGames.com) or visit our websites.

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[www.VolatileGames.com](http://www.VolatileGames.com)



# Workshops



All these  
photos are  
on your  
DVD

# Photoshop SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

Learn construction techniques, photographic montage methods and other Photoshop tricks with

**Thomas Scholes**

**D**uring this workshop, I'm going to share with you the process and methodology that I used in the construction of a photo and paint montage. I'll talk about some of the pitfalls and benefits of using photography and also cover the tools that I used for shape extraction, including Quick Mask and Tonal Range Blending. In addition, I'll discuss in detail several tools that I employed for shape and image manipulation, including Transform tools and layer modes such as Soft Light.

I began using this method to provide a refresher from my usual techniques and subjects. If you ever find yourself in a slump, nothing will help you recharge better than changing your subject matter and your approach to it. Afterwards you will find you're able to return to what you've done in the past with a fresh outlook and new methodology. This is the key to motivation and progress.

I really enjoy the creative element of the method I'll discuss here and it's opened my eyes to possibilities I might

not have discovered. I would encourage everyone to employ diverse methods and techniques in their own visualisation and painting process. Many artists seem to think that practising diverse methods does them no good if it does not apply to their style. Through experimentation and exploration, however, we maximise learning, and through diversity your style will mature and progress.

Please look me up on the [ImagineFX.com](http://www.imaginefx.com) forums or my website if you'd like to know more. I'm always happy to help!

## 1 Sketch and preparation

Before I can start assembling the individual parts, a base and concept are necessary to build upon. Using a simple palette knife does well with man-made shapes and angles. I do a few preliminary sketches focusing on interesting shapes within a loose humanoid form. I like the advancing pose and jagged shapes of my second sketch and decide upon a more adversarial concept.

From here I clean up a few edges and shapes as well as think further about how to modify these interesting abstracts into purposeful forms and parts. Once I have a good base to build upon I then lighten the canvas to enable a greater value range. This is then covered up with a rusty orange colour on a multiply layer to set my palette.

## 2 Adaptation and refinement

I tend to keep the silhouette as blocky and primitive as possible because the intricacy of shape will come from the



application of photographs during the next stage. The shapes that result are more often than not things I would not normally have considered with paint alone, which helps me explore different shapes and expand my visual repertoire. Often while working on other projects, I will recall the shapes that I have discovered in this fashion and the end result is better for it.

## 3 Bypassing common problems

When using photographs, mismatched lighting coming from all directions can cause significant problems. The method that I generally utilise masks the direction of troublesome lighting and reduces most information into mid-tones. The Soft Light layer mode is the perfect option for this as it enables the values to show through with little artefacting and the colours contained within are influenced by what is underneath, which creates a harmony that would otherwise be difficult to obtain from such diverse sources.



#### 4 Basic transformations

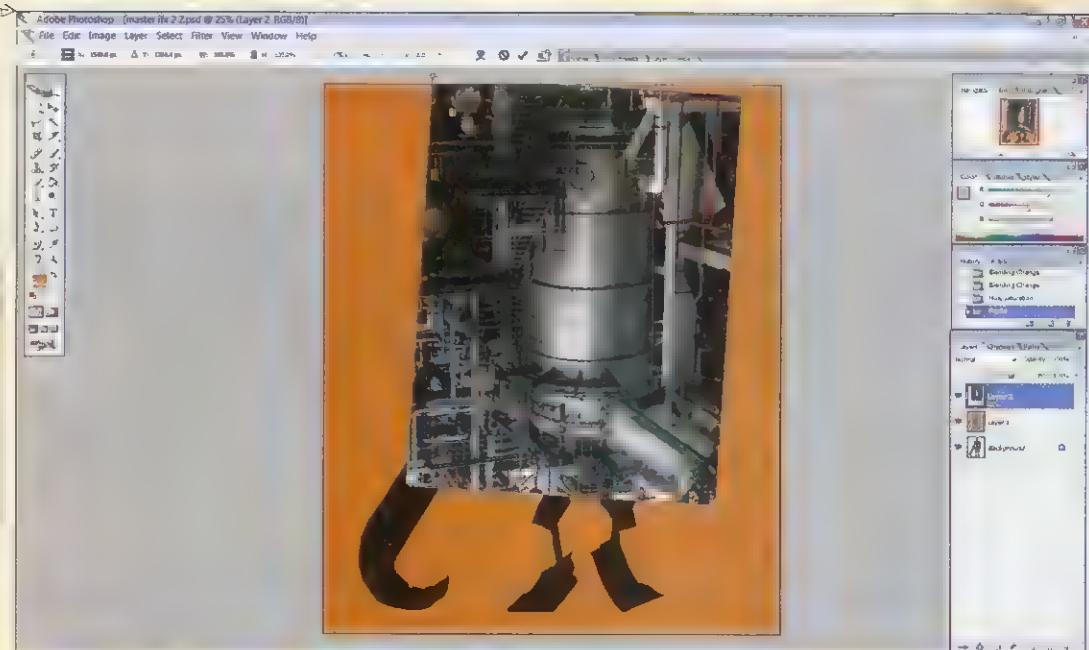
A picture of a large-plated cylinder in my photography collection has the right shapes to add to the head. After copying the photograph onto my canvas I hit **Ctrl+T/Cmd+T** to enable the Transform tools. Once I've done an initial resize to get the photograph to manageable proportions, I rotate the cylinder to match the angle of my silhouette by moving the cursor outside of the Transform box and dragging either to the left or right.

I find the Distort Transform option works best for correcting perspective and basic shape manipulation for anything further, Warp Transform is best. I'll talk about this in more detail and how I've trimmed the overlap later on.

#### 5 Embrace your happy accidents

One of the things I enjoy most about this type of process is serendipity, or 'happy accidents.' Usually I work roughly with the photographs, trying not to cut anything out until I've seen if random bits affect the overall painting positively. Shapes will often line up and I discover things I wouldn't have consciously considered. Additionally, this is a great way to build up random grit and grime, overlapping with time to create interest by way of texture.

As a result I will often have to cover up or modify underlying layers to give more clarity. I prefer to do this not by erasing the information underneath, but instead by creating a normal layer and painting a new base coat the same colour as my initial silhouette underneath. This enables me to backtrack if necessary.



#### 6 Advanced blending

I've discovered a set of gears that I think will work well for the shoulders and was pleased to find that without an awful lot of adjustment they gave me some good shapes for the hips and textures elsewhere.

To trim overlapping parts that do not fit into my silhouette I use Tonal Range Blending that can be found under Blending Options in Layer Styles (double-click your layer or from the Layer Menu>Layer Style>Blending Options). The bottom box with two greyscale bars is what you're looking for; in this workshop I'm using the second bar, Underlying Layer. This blends the current layer based on the values of what is

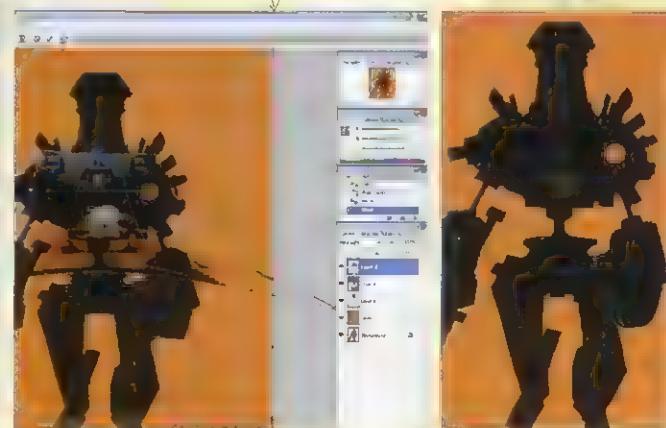
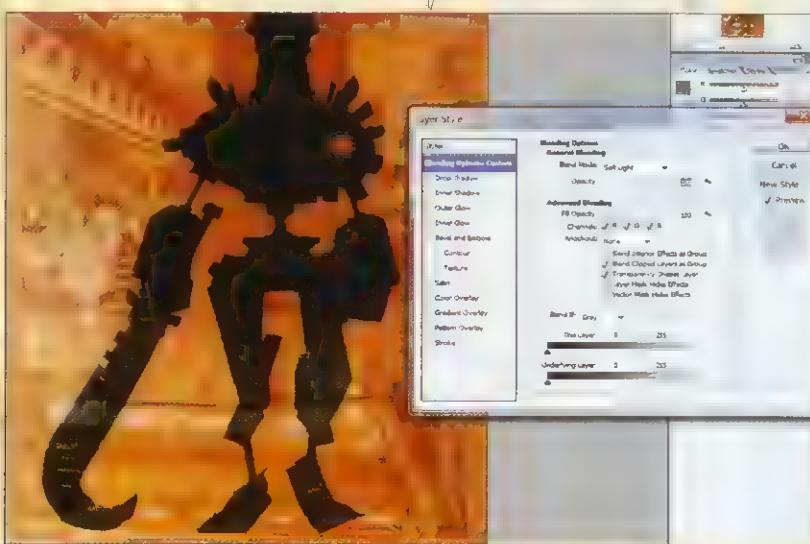
#### PRO SECRETS

##### Focus

To ensure greater artistic analysis, focus on your problem areas, divide and conquer. It's root out exhaustion, your energy, doing too many things at once. Don't draw the entire figure if you're to work on hands and feet. Just draw hands and feet! Work in grayscale unless you want to study colour. Study from life and reference in order to focus on drawing and rendering. But most importantly, enjoy it!

#### 7 Warp transform

I've found a great photo that works well as a sternum and collarbone. The rest doesn't match up perfectly with my silhouette, but I can see it has the potential to do so. I turn to Warp Transform, an excellent tool for more precise image manipulation. Using the bottom corner anchors I align the shapes to my silhouette and give the collars a little bend in the middle using the top centre mesh. It's an intuitive tool that I often use throughout this painting.





## 8 Trimming the fat

The shapes on the legs are defined planes and require more precision to match perspective. Sacrificing the extra detail and texture, I trim the excess around my basic rectangle before using the Transform tools to gain better control. Once I have a trimmed shape I can duplicate this layer in its raw format to use for the opposite leg later.

## 9 Complex cutting and Quick Mask

The most efficient method I've found for separating elements is with a general purpose round brush and a Quick Mask (hit Q to activate/deactivate). Using a brush will give you better control over edges and over opacity. This results in a more natural selection that doesn't look like it's been pasted on.



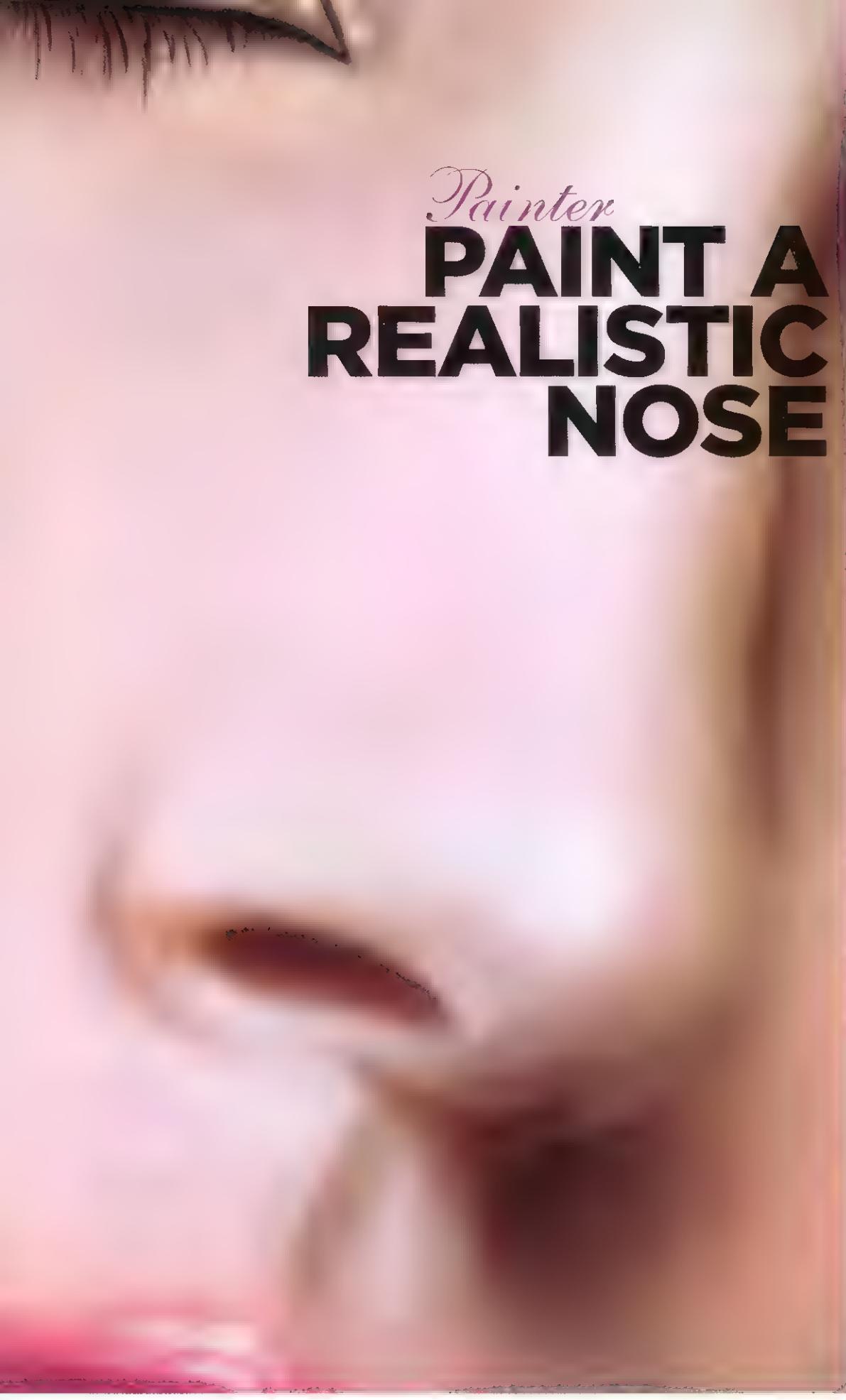
## 10 Background and composition thoughts

I've set a blueprint photo that accents the theme on an Overlay layer for the background. It has a crease down the middle that I use to draw the eye in and connect with the sword. Where the texture interferes with the subject I simply erase. I also either paint out or clone over any tangents or areas that distract. At this point I'm exploring how the painting reads while mirrored and discover I like it better flipped.

## 11 Lighting and final edits

I've darkened areas that should be in shadow with a combination of soft light layers and multiply layers. The lighter parts were created using the Dodge tool set to highlights as well as mid-tones. I've decided to paint in some rim lighting to further describe the form. Finishing touches include a bit of bloom lighting added with a low flow airbrush, and depth created by darkening just the machinery of the background.





# Painter PAINT A REALISTIC NOSE

The nose is one of the most difficult elements of portrait painting, but

**Katarina Sokalova** has some advice to make life easier

**D**espite the great variety of forms, all noses have a common structure defined by the anatomy of bones and muscles. In general there are two types of human noses: thin and thick. The proportions of all noses are roughly the same and this should be taken into consideration while you're painting. Thin noses, which are usually typical of Europeans, can have many different forms depending on the bridge, tip and nostrils. The bridge is the part that is between the top and tip of the nose and can be straight, concave or convex.

Begin any sketches with the basic proportions (height, length, width) then define the inclination and position of the nose with respect to perspective. After sketching the main outline you need to check the nose's proportions, perspective and form and make any corrections to these before moving on. That done, you can start work on the details.

The nose depends on the individual characteristics. Because the bones are usually visible in most noses, one of the most characteristic-defining properties of the nose is a small hump; this, along with the tip, defines the overall form of the nose. The bridge of the nose determines the form of the tip, which can be straight, turned up or pointing down. As for the nostrils, they can be long or short, narrow or wide.

A common mistake is to make it so the bases of the edges of the nose are set too low in relation to the tip, resulting in the corner of the nose ending up in the wrong place.

Remember that when you're drawing a nose you should pay close attention to each separate part of it, and be sure that each of the individual elements obeys the overall form.

# Quick Technique Painting a nose



## 1 Starting sketch

I'll begin with a sketch. The girl I want to paint has a thin nose with a small hump and slightly snub tip, which makes her look coquettish. I have chosen the three-quarters perspective. The lateral plane of the nose that's turned to the painter isn't reduced in this perspective, while the opposite part of the nose and the plane of the base are reduced (in this case they're practically hidden). Notice that in a three-quarters perspective the far nostril is almost invisible, but it still exists so you must remember to paint it.

## 2 Light and shade

In Painter, start working with shadows and highlights. The front part of the nose should be lighter than the sides, and I try to create soft transitions between shadows and light. The portrait hasn't got sharp transitions on the face so

shadows on the nose shouldn't be traced strongly. Do consider the light exposure in transitions of forms from one surface to another. Sketch the nostrils, and note that the edge of the nostril is on the same line as the inner corner of the eye. I shade the parts that are in shadow. Don't paint sharp edges; convey the form with soft lines. The gradation of the light helps to show structure. The details of the near plane should be clearer than those of the far plane. I also shade the dark side of the nose, which is on the right side here. It provides the illusion of depth and size. Lastly, I add some shade to the bridge.

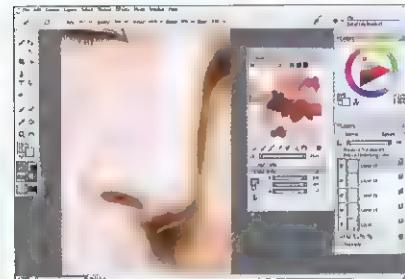


**Artist PROFILE**  
Katarina Sokalova  
COUNTRY: Ukraine

Katarina began batik and graphics classes at the age of six. Graduating from the Art Union of Painters of Ukraine in 2002, she has been working as a CG artist for five years and has had work printed in the Expose and Exotique series of books. She has also held a series of exhibitions of her work and does commissions. [katarinasokalova.com](http://katarinasokalova.com)

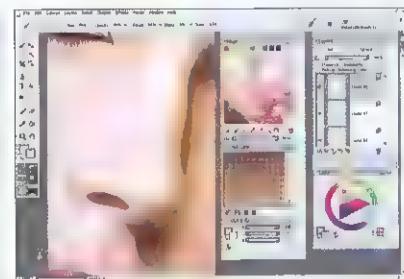
**DVD Assets**  
The files you need are on your DVD.  
FOLDERS: Screenshots  
FILES: Nose\_1\_KS.psd - Nose\_5\_KS.psd  
SOFTWARE: Painter X (demo)

**PRO SECRETS**  
**Use colour**  
Don't use black for shadows or white for highlights and reflections. Only use tints that are close to the base skin colour that you've chosen for the portrait. I like to add colder and warmer, more and less saturated tints into shadows and highlights. Such combinations make the portrait more interesting and also make the skin tone more realistic.



## 3 Skin tints

Don't forget that second nostril! I've sketched it with small highlight stroke at the far side of the nose. Don't mark a full contour of a nose from both sides as that makes the portrait appear unrealistic. Instead create a contour with smooth transitions between light and shadow. Usually the areas around the base of the nostrils should not be outlined. Convey their volume and form using warmer, more saturated skin tints. At this stage I gradually add detail to the nostrils and the tip of the nose with highlights that are hardly visible.



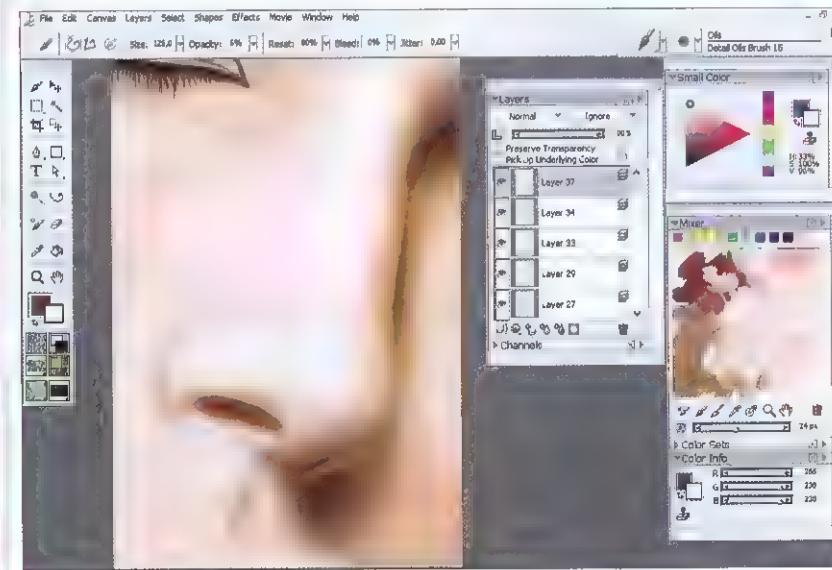
## 5 Grooves and contrast

I want to add more contrast to the nose from its far side. For that I make the shadow beyond the nose deeper using a small-diameter brush with high transparency. That way, I mark out a small hump on the nose. Then, using a soft brush with greater diameter, I make the shadow under the nose deeper and more degraded with a non-saturated brown. I also detail the form of the nose, using the tints of base skin colour. For the lighter areas of the nose I use warmer tints of colour, and for shadows, cooler tints with some lilac.



## 4 Highlights

Let's paint the highlight on the tip of the nose to add volume. The highlight should be small and softly shaded. Remember not to use white. Notice that for the nostril I've chosen a rich chocolate, not black. I've also painted the nasolabial groove, the area that connects the nose with the lips. The shape is rather like a teardrop – at the top it's as wide as the septum but it expands slightly when it meets the upper lip. I've slightly shaded this groove – note a small highlight that I put in its centre to show its concavity.



# Workshops

“A concept design job in games means being able to communicate ideas clearly and effectively.”



BOTTOM LIGHTING

## THE 20 RULES OF GAME CONCEPT ART

The games industry's concept designers come from many different professional and educational backgrounds, but certain required traits and skills are universal, says **France Teal**

**A** question I often hear from people who are not in games or art-oriented industries is: "You get paid to play games all day?"

Obviously the answer is "no", but it is possible to be paid to design and draw all day, which is just as good, if not better. "How do I become a

concept designer for the games industry?" is another question I'm often asked. There are many different paths you can take to achieve this goal, but they all involve certain common elements. I'll talk about some of those, but probably the main thing to remember is that the job is principally about *design* –

yes, illustration and rendering skills are very important, but they make up only half the equation. Getting a concept design job in the games industry means being able to define and solve problems given varying amounts of information, and being able to communicate ideas clearly and effectively.

### EDUCATION

Concept designers come from many different educational backgrounds – fine art, illustration, industrial or product design, architecture or some other profession altogether. There's going to be some imbalance or deficiency that you'll have to make up for on your own. You have to be a skilled generalist, well versed in many different areas of history, science, art, sociology and psychology – the more the better.

### DEFINITIONS

Above and beyond rendering skills, concept design is about defining a problem, formulating an interesting and elegant solution, and graphically defining that design solution as clearly as possible. Rendering skills are the tools that enable a concept designer to do his or her job. I read

somewhere once something to the effect of "concept design is a subset of illustration." It would be more accurate to say that illustration and concept design overlap.

### THE ROLE OF THE CONCEPT ARTIST

Steven Olds, a talented artist and art director who taught me a lot of what I know, told me once that a good concept designer is also by definition a good role player – he or she should be able to hide their own artistic idiosyncrasies in order to best serve the project, similar to the way a good actor can portray any type of character.



Build up an extensive mental databank of reference material – architecture is a good start point.

4

Travel, experience life, see different environments, pay attention to the different ways people build things, put stuff together, eat, gather and relax. As artists, we tend to draw what we know – expanding that database of "what we know" makes us more versatile, giving us a broader range of stuff to draw from (pun intended).

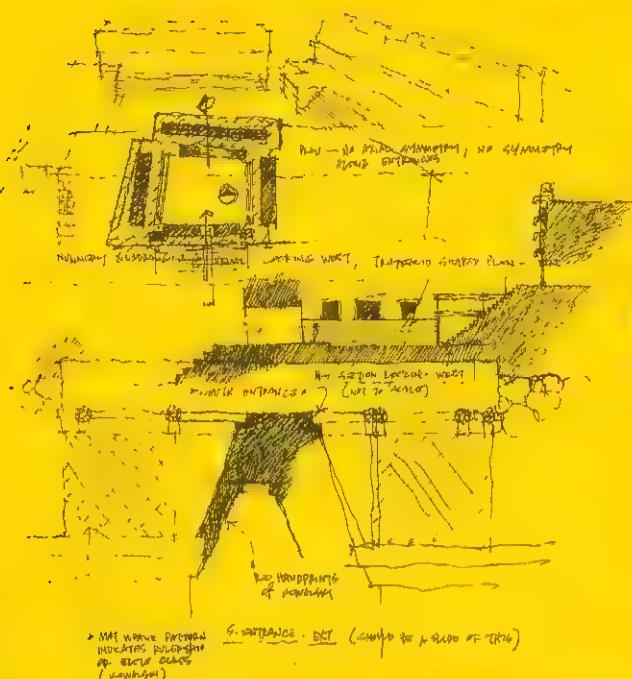
*Artist*  
**PROFILE**



# Workshops

5

Accurate photo reference is essential. For real-world material in particular, if you just rely on your memory the best you can realistically hope for is to get it close; it's guaranteed that somebody somewhere will know more about that thing you're drawing than you do, and will know you haven't done your homework. Short of going somewhere to see something first hand, finding and using photo reference is vitally important.



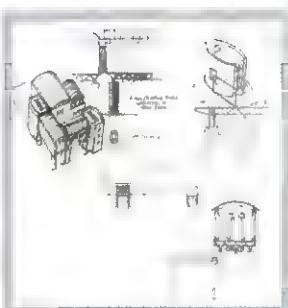
Don't just look at people, objects and environments, analyse them.

## ACTIVE OBSERVATION

Studying and sketching your surroundings (people as well as objects) trains your observational skills. This helps to build up your mental visual vocabulary, as well as something I call "active observation skills", which means analysing what you see. For instance, rather than simply noting that a column has some bolts, study the structure to understand *why* the bolts are there.

## FORM AND FUNCTION

In the real world, function is a prime component of design - you've all heard the term "form follows function." Personally I'm a fan of that, especially as it pertains to architecture. I love buildings that express their structure and utilites. In entertainment design, the main issue is "does it look cool (and solve the design problem)?" You're not restricted by real-world physics constraints; of course, designs are more convincing if there is some nod to real life.



In games artwork, form isn't so strictly bound by function as in other disciplines.



## SYNTHESISING VS ORIGINATING

Consider the balance between synthesising and originating. By originating I mean coming up with something unique. It's almost impossible to pull off, and you run the risk of alienating your audience. Synthesising means combining different familiar elements that are rarely used together, providing a familiar link for your audience.

## LINE QUALITY

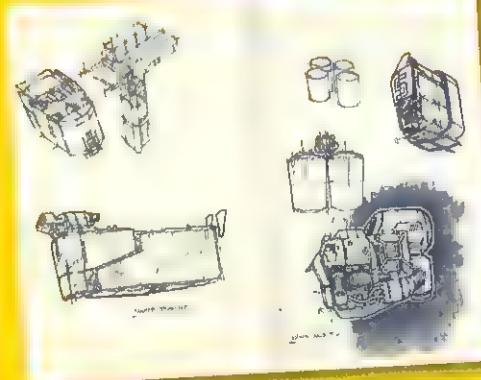
The primary purpose of your drawings is to communicate an idea, so be clear and concise. Eliminate unnecessary noise and clutter, use heavy lines sparingly to indicate important outlines and lighter lines to indicate details and textures.

## NO ANIME, PLEASE

Just my opinion, but avoid putting anime in your portfolio. If you must, make sure what you do is so good it can cure cancer. Unless you're adding some interesting new spin, it has the effect of giving your work an 'amateur artist' stigma.

## BIG PICTURE

As you begin a project one of the first things to establish is the 'big picture'. Your client may have some ideas about mood, or a certain character. As the concept designer you have to be able to take a step back and perceive the project as a whole, so you know what parts are truly important, and what obscures the big picture.



## 10 INTO CHUNKS

One approach to design that I have had some success with is to break down the design task into manageable chunks - separate silhouette studies from pose studies from texture and material studies. The odds are against you hitting a home run on all those different aspects with one single drawing.



## PERSPECTIVE

In ImagineFX issue 16, I wrote an article on the convenience of using 3D as a concept design tool, but it's still important to have a grasp of perspective to be able to sketch environments convincingly and



quickly. Again, it's a matter of keeping the big picture in mind – with 3D it's too easy to get bogged down in small details that don't serve the big picture.



Where to add detail? That is the question. Well, it's one of the questions you should ask yourself.

## DESIGN DRAWING

Design Drawing is a term that refers to the process of hammering out and refining a design on paper. This process might involve drawing different views, 'x-ray vision'

shots and handwritten notes. Typically this isn't something you show your client, and it will often end up looking messy and almost incomprehensible. The goal with this type of drawing is to explore different options and then work up and refine that initial design idea.



## HIERARCHY

Certain drawing conventions help achieve successful visual communication. Line weight hierarchy was discussed earlier; the idea of hierarchy can also be extended to value, concentration of detail, and texture. Using all of these ideas in conjunction, and eliminating extraneous noise and clutter from your sketches can result in a simple, clear sketch that conveys your design ideas.



## 16 SILHOUETTE

For games, character design depends heavily on silhouette, which is also sometimes referred to as the 'initial read' of a character. I've emphasised the importance of silhouette in character design before, but it's important enough in the context of the concept design profession to bear repeating.

## 17 HIGHLIGHTS AND IMPLIQUES

There's another balance to be struck in terms of when and where to put detail. As mentioned before, creating focus is a game involving colour, lighting and detail. Implying detail often does the job as well as carefully rendering every bit of it. In some cases, it's actually preferable, so that you don't focus undue attention on places you'd rather not.

## LIGHTING AND MATERIALS

One of the basic visual communication skills is the ability to render different lighting conditions and different materials. The key to indicating materials lies in how different ones react to different lighting conditions – reflectivity, specularity, grain, texture are all traits that can be affected in different ways by lighting.



## DESIGN PROCESS

Just like in school, when you were asked to show your work, sometimes it's helpful to provide some documentation of your design process. Notes and sketches like this can form a valuable part of your personal library – ideas can be reconfigured and reused in other situations as the need arises. I wouldn't recommend using finished designs this way, but preliminary sketches can provide seeds for new ideas.



## THE PORTFOLIO

What should go in your book? Show that you can handle a wide range of subjects, time periods, styles and moods. Show some of the process stuff discussed above, so we can follow your thought process. Show pride in your work by packaging it in a professional manner. Make sure your stuff is badass. Simple, isn't it?





Next month in...

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

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an epic walkthrough

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30% - SEE PAGE 29**

UNITED STATES READERS PLEASE SEE PAGE 71

**ISSUE 20 ON SALE TUES 3 JULY**

**Monsters and Moore**  
Paint grisly monsters and  
recreate the style of the  
legendary Chris Moore in  
two fantastic workshops.

*Image by the incredible Dehong He.  
Exclusive workshop next issue!*

Contents correct at time of going to press

*Painter* 8.0

PART ONE OF THREE

# THE CUSTOM BRUSH GUIDE

## SKIN & HAIR

In the first part of a new series **Marta Dahlig** shows how to make best use of custom brushes, focusing here on characters

**T**hanks to painting software, artists are not limited to traditional brushes any more, but are encouraged to create their own. In this three-part workshop I will be describing how to use custom brushes to create characters, costumes and the environment. While this workshop is mainly designed for Photoshop users, I will also share tips for Painter users to achieve similar effects.

*Artist*  
**PROFILE**

**Marta Dahlig**  
COUNTRY: Poland



bio  
portfolio  
links  
contact  
about  
Dahlig

This is the first brush I use for any painting. An altered Hard Round brush with ragged edges is perfect for the first stages of colour blocking, because aside from applying colours, its edges will prevent the transitions from being too rough. The pressure sensitive opacity will enable you to create a bigger variety of skin tones.

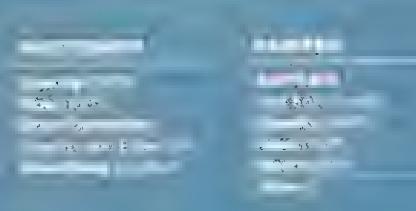
A Spackled brush is the best thing to choose when you want to blend facial skin tones. Thanks to its shape and pressure-related opacity, it can blend really well and hint at skin pore texture. Smooth the transitions with this brush, while picking the colours with an Eye Dropper tool. Painter users can use the Blender brush; while it doesn't render a natural skin texture, it creates satisfying effects.

The Airbrush is an extremely flexible tool. It's perfect for adding in anything to your work, from painting strands of hair to adding little details, such as blushes, moles and so on. An Airbrush is also a good way to soften the edges of painted objects and those rougher transitions between certain shades, creating an illusion of fleshy softness.

This brush is perfect for enriching the colour palette of an already painted body part, and I always use it for this task. Thanks to its distinctive shape and angle variations, applying new shades naturally is extremely easy: just choose a colour and run with it over the painted skin. If you apply the colours carefully on a low opacity, you won't really require any extra smoothing. This brush also works great as a skin tone blender.

The small Spackled brush is great to render skin pores with. Use it on a low opacity setting on a separate layer, so you can play with layer modes later (Soft Light usually gives the most natural effects). To enrich the 'automatic' pore effect, create another layer on top of the existing one and, with an Airbrush, randomly place some small lighter dots on top of the previous ones.

# Workshops

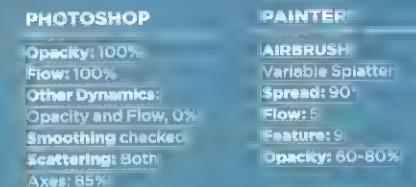


After having the hair basis marked with an Airbrush, it's good to start adding some texture. This simple Spackled brush is perfect for this job. Start applying the hair strands, gradually moving from bigger and darker to smaller and lighter.

In Painter, I highly recommend the Acrylic brushes – aside from a 'strand' feel, they will automatically create a very interesting texture.



This simple brush, thanks to its pressure adjusted size and opacity, is a natural choice for painting eyelashes. Use it on a low opacity to mark the shades under the eyelashes (1). Afterwards, size it down a bit and increase the opacity, marking the actual eyelashes (2). This brush is also a wonderful tool for hair detailing.



This Spackled brush is a great special effects tool. When painting characters, you can use it to texture mouths: choose a light colour and run with the brush over the highlighted part of the lips. To achieve natural effects, switch the sizes and opacity constantly. You can also use this brush to enhance a magic spell rendition, by creating a fairy dust effect. Furthermore, you can also paint stars with it!



This custom brush was made from a leaf photograph I took. It's perfect for creating scratched surfaces, but most of all for scars. Choose a neutral brown colour and use the brush over the skin (by clicking, not dragging). Then experiment with the layer modes (I recommend Overlay). Later, you might want to shrink the brush and add some lighter textures to some parts of the scar to make it look more natural.



This ragged brush is fabulous for adding dirt effects to the skin and clothing. Simply pick a darker colour and click around the surface, remembering to switch the sizes and opacity constantly. Afterwards, change the Layer mode to Multiply and add some Gaussian Blur to make your brushstrokes look natural.



**Next Month: Fabric – Issue 20 on sale 3 July**

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FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

# ImagineFX Back issues

Missed an issue of ImagineFX? Call our hotline right now and pick up a past issue before they sell out...

Issue 13 January 2007



Uncover the secrets of drawing and painting dragons, learn how to draw vampires, discover the top 10 sci-fi book covers, and paint realistic looking water. Plus we interview the legend that is Dave McKean, and celebrate our first birthday with some very special cards.

Issue 14 February 2007



Creating sci-fi SCI-FI ART

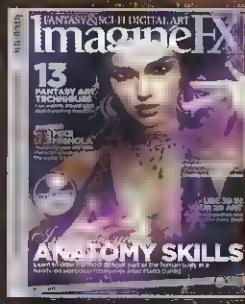
Discover how to create fabulous sci-fi art, from futuristic characters to apocalyptic landscapes. Learn about custom brushes, and meet Fetó. Plus, we interview the great Marko Djurdjevic, and learn how to model realistic blood in 3D.

Issue 15 March 2007



Learn how to paint beautiful portraits and how to create stunning antique-style images with Hoang Nguyen. Combine digital and traditional media, and discover heavy metal art that really rocks. And make sure you don't miss João Ruas's guide to creating a fantasy city.

Issue 16 April 2007



Master the experts top fantasy art techniques, learn how to draw the most difficult part of the human body with hands-on tuition from Marta Dahlig, and discover how Hellboy was born in our exclusive Mike Mignola interview. Plus, create a futuristic motorbike.

Issue 17 May 2007



Make your own comic as experts share their advice on all aspects of graphic novel creation, and learn how to render water and give aliens intelligence. Paint a fiery dragon princess with Svetlin Velinov, discover fractal art secrets, and get inside Alan Moore's mind!

Issue 18 June 2007



See how four modern artists interpret classic master works in this special collector's edition. Share Daniel Dociu's art tips, and learn how to paint eyes with Katarina Sokolova.



DVD!

Each issue comes with a DVD packed full of workshop files, software demos, fonts, brushes and more!

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BY PHONE +44 (0) 870 837 4773

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Mountain Standard Time 6am to 2.30pm & Pacific Standard Time 6am to 1.30pm)

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UNITED STATES READERS TURN TO PAGE 73



# Painter skills CHARACTER CONCEPTS

**Andrew Jones** shows you how, using Painter, you can create an interesting character concept in a matter of hours

**C**reating a main character for a video game can be challenging. There are so many ideas in the sea of consciousness to grapple with: is this idea cliché, has it been seen before, will anyone want to see this character? These are common questions the artist must overcome before they even begin to sketch the character.

Other questions that you have to think about include: what is the purpose of this character, what is its intention, and most importantly is this a character that the player will identify with and want to invest their time exploring?

This character, pictured opposite, was created for one of Massive Black's several projects. I began the character by drawing out its face. I wanted to create something that was both beautiful and strange. After all, everyone can relate with beauty, it's a common cord among human beings and

something we are all attracted to. I also wanted to evoke something mysterious and dynamic about this character, so I decided to make the face out of something that was beautiful, but by no means a 'normal' facial material – butterfly and moth wings.

Wings are organic and fluid shapes, which have an aesthetic appeal and carry many visual metaphors, adding another layer of depth to the character design.

Before moving on to the figure, I choose to invest more time rendering out the face. This is helpful for my level of commitment to the character. At this time, I also establish a simple colour palette that flowed into the rest of the design. By creating a face that I was happy with it gives me confidence and 'buy in' to carry through to the rest of the design.

Next I take the Lasso tool and Painter's Pattern Brush, along with a few custom patterns, and quickly rough in the

silhouette of the body. Working with the large, abstract shapes gives me an early impression of the space this character will occupy and makes me focus on larger, more striking shapes instead of extraneous detail, which it's easy to become bogged down with.

After I feel comfortable with the shape of the character I lay in the rest of the surface detail. I continue with the moth/butterfly motifs, basing the detail on the repetition of wings and cocoon-like shapes. I knew from the outset that I wanted a dynamic, particle-based element to be associated with the character, so I set the base of its skull on fire with light, then added an incandescent moth radiating from its head. Now I have a character with beauty and symbolic depth, which has a sense of power and mystery. Stories now form in my mind about the character and it takes on a life of its own.



## Artist PROFILE

### Andrew Jones

COUNTRY: US

CLIENTS:

Massive Black, Nintendo, Nike, NCSoft

Andrew is from Colorado but now lives in San Francisco and has travelled extensively to share his art skills in worldwide workshops.

WEB: [www.androidjones.com](http://www.androidjones.com)

## Step-by-step: Creating a video game character in Painter

**1** Create a simple sketch using the 2b Pencil brush set to Cover. I want to create something simple and beautiful, using the Chalk tool and a custom paper to add some random noise from a paper texture of microphotography. The paper texture alludes to the patterns of a moth's wings further reinforcing the overall theme of my character.



**2** I render the character before moving on to the body. I start with the eyes so they grip me as soon as possible. I choose a low saturated colour for the face and highly saturated warms and cools for the eyes to attract attention. Some highlights are added with the Glow brush, and deep red shadows added for warmth.



**3** Using the Lasso, Paint Bucket and the Pattern Chalk tools I rough in the body's main shapes, beginning with a loose shape selection. Then I employ exaggerated proportion for a surreal feel. The custom patterns I use are a wing shape and a fern pattern to give the character a more organic and natural flow.



# On the disc

# YOUR DVD

## WELCOME TO THE FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART ImagineFX COMPANION DVD

**MAC & PC**



**A great selection of resources await you on this month's disc. We begin with the Miki 1 Base Figure Pack for Poser, plus a bonus Clothing Pack – together these are worth \$75.**

Other resources include a collection of high-resolution images from the fantastic artist resource 3d.sk, and a set of apps that enable you to create your own computer fantasy game, plus a collection of skeleton photos. The workshop section is crammed with the files you need to follow this issue's workshops. You can find files from the brilliant JP Targette, Christian Bravery, Tom Scholes, Katarina Sokolova, and Marta Dahlig. Plus there's a fantastic FXPoser containing the best reader art sent in to us, as well as a selection of the best artwork found in the ImagineFX website gallery.

Until next time...

*Tom*



**Tom Rudderham,  
DVD Editor**

### Want to send us feedback?

Like to see your artwork or software on this DVD?  
Contact us using the details below...

**Reader artwork:** [fxpose@imaginefx.com](mailto:fxpose@imaginefx.com)

**Email the DVD editor:** Tom Rudderham, [tom@imaginefx.com](mailto:tom@imaginefx.com)

**Postal address:** ImagineFX magazine, Future Publishing Ltd, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW

**Phone:** +44 (0) 1225 442244

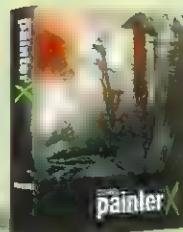
**DVD issues:** [support@futurenet.co.uk](mailto:support@futurenet.co.uk)

**FREE  
POSER  
MODEL**

## Miki 1.0 Base Figure Pack

PLUS: free figure and clothing pack from e-frontier

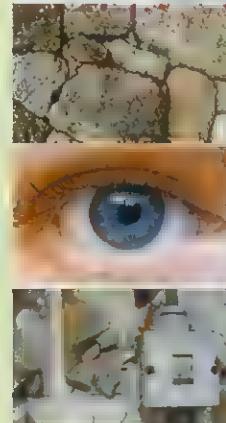
See page 24 for more info!



## Full listing:

- iCorrect EditLab (PC)
- Painter X (Mac and PC)
- Paint Shop Pro Photo XI (PC)
- Photoshop CS2 (Mac and PC)
- The GIMP (Mac and PC)
- Primate Keyer plug-in (PC)
- ArtRage 2 (Mac and PC)
- Vue 5 Esprit (Mac and PC)
- Cinema 4D 10.1 (Mac and PC)

MORE FREE  
IMAGES ON  
THE DISC



### FREE IMAGES AND TEXTURES

- Miki 1.0 Base Figure Pack
- Skeleton photos
- Create your own game – contains: C4 Game Engine (Mac and PC), Game Maker (PC), iClone (PC), Torque Game Builder (Mac and PC), Torque ShowTool Pro (Mac and PC)
- Human body photos
- Free images and textures (15 new files plus archive)
- ImagineFX wallpapers

### WORKSHOPS AND TUTORIALS

- EXCLUSIVE TO IMAGINEFX

Follow this month's workshops with these high-res, multi-layered files

Get ImagineFX delivered to your door every month... **Subscribe now on page 29**  
US readers please turn to page 73



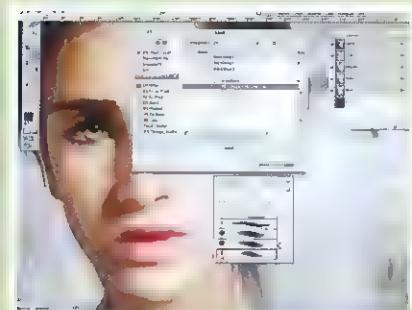
See individual workshop pages for files and folders

# Workshop Files

High-res, multi-layered artwork from professional digital artists

Use resources created by world-class artists...

Install the brushes created for ImagineFX by Marta Dahlgren in the first of a three-part brush workshop on page 92.



Bring this robotic character to life

Find all the files and screenshots you need to follow the character creation workshop by Thomas Scholes on page 80.



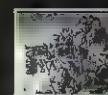
## The ImagineFX DVD

FANTASY SCIFI DIGITAL ART Your DVD has been thoroughly scanned and tested at all stages of its production, but we still recommend you run a virus checker and have an up-to-date backup of your hard disk. Future Publishing does not accept responsibility for any disruption, damage and/or loss to your data or computer system that may occur while using this disc or the programs and data on it. In the unlikely event of your disc being defective please email our support team at [support@futurenet.co.uk](mailto:support@futurenet.co.uk) for further assistance. If you would prefer to talk to a member of our reader support team in person you are invited to call +44 (0) 1225 442244. We've put this DVD together to help you get more from ImagineFX magazine. If you have any comments about the software we include or you have suggestions for software that you would like to see on future discs please send an email to Tom Rudderham, DVD Editor at [tom@imaginefx.com](mailto:tom@imaginefx.com)



## FXPosé interactive

The best reader artwork  
Your latest works of art showcased in our interactive gallery



**Mack Sztaba**  
Location: Canada  
Web: [www.mackart.ca](http://www.mackart.ca)



**Fabio Caserini**  
Location: Italy  
Web: [www.imagewall.com](http://www.imagewall.com)



**Jim Svanberg**  
Location: Sweden  
Web: [www.jimsvanberg.se](http://www.jimsvanberg.se)



**Joe Miller**  
Location: US  
Web: N/A



**Chris Malidore**  
Location: US  
Web: [www.artisticways.com](http://www.artisticways.com)



**Dawn Austin**  
Location: Hong Kong  
Web: [austinillustration.net](http://austinillustration.net)



**Wan Miao Miao**  
Location: Italy  
Web: [yayachan33.deviantart.com](http://yayachan33.deviantart.com)



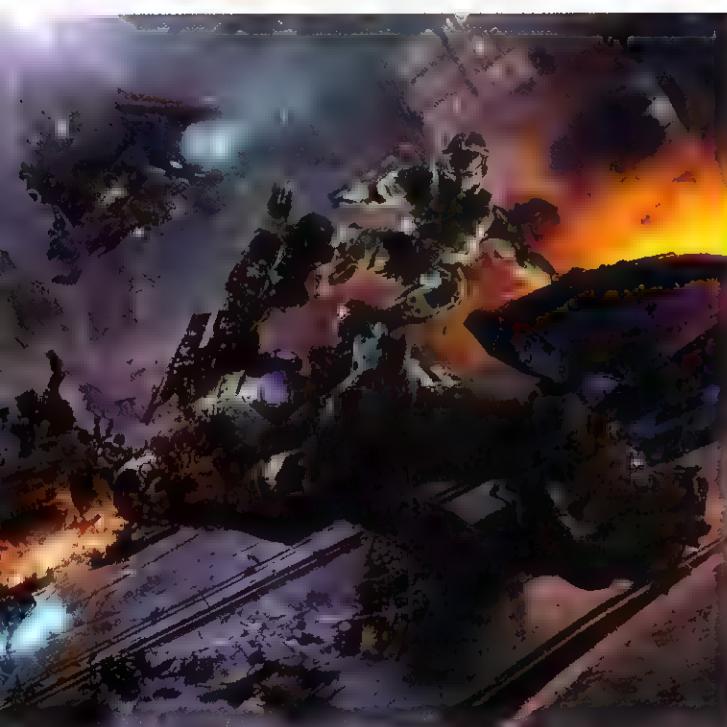
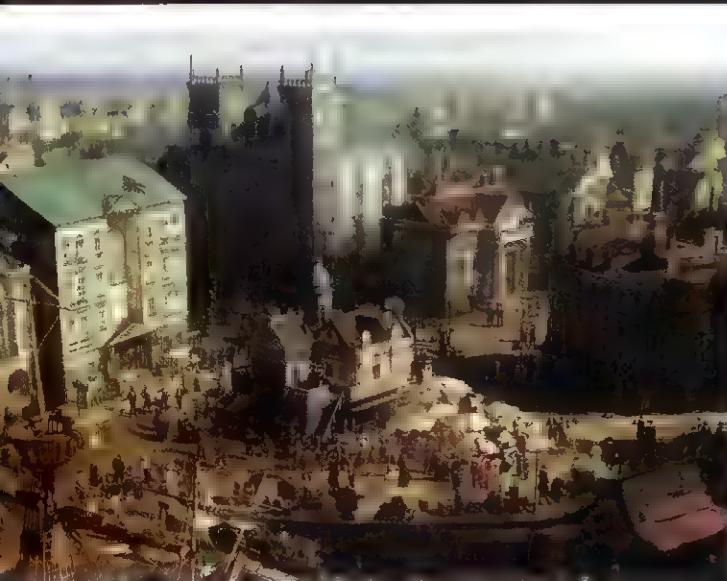
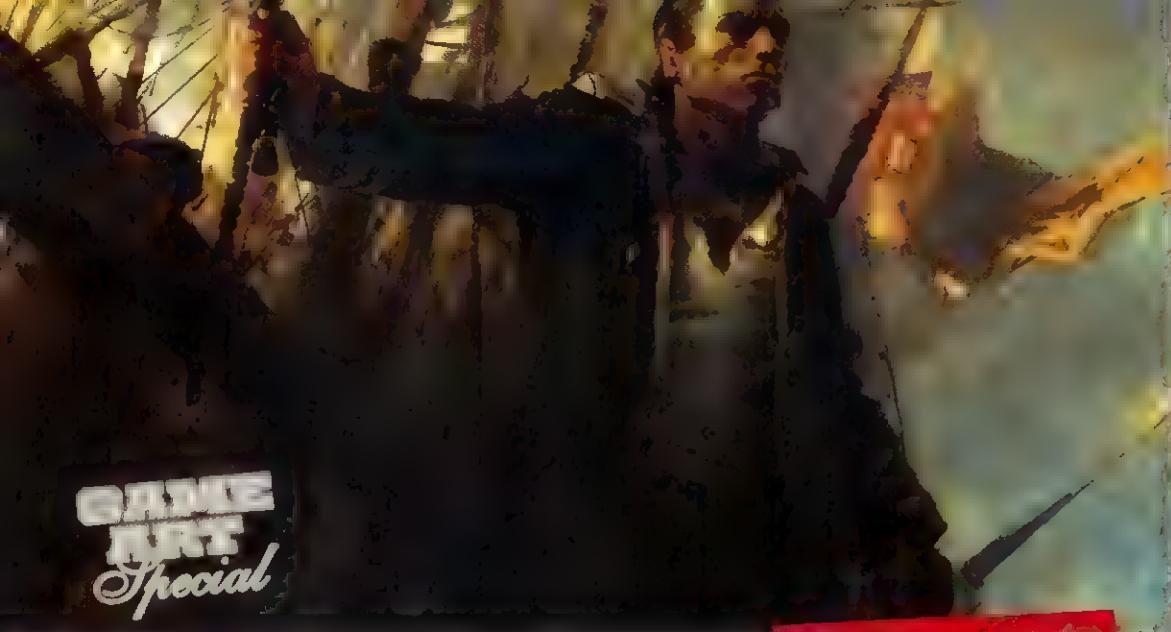
**Yngve Martinussen**  
Location: Norway  
Web: [yngvemartinussen.deviantart.com](http://yngvemartinussen.deviantart.com)



**Laura G Goodacre**  
Location: US  
Web: [www.myntflesh.com](http://www.myntflesh.com)



**Julia Davis**  
Location: Australia  
Web: [noxienar.deviantart.com](http://noxienar.deviantart.com)



**A**nother Pasadena Art Center student (see Viktor Antonov's work on page 42), this time of product design and later illustration, Craig Mullins is a veteran concept artist who cut his teeth in Detroit, designing cars for Ford. Subsequent work for architects and theme parks put him in touch with Hollywood, where he produced matte paintings for movies such as *Forrest Gump*, *Contact* and *The Matrix*.

Now based in Hawaii, where he enjoys working until the small hours of the morning, Mullins is finding new fans in the world of video games. Having illustrated the likes of *Age of Empires*, *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* and *Need for Speed*, his most popular work stems from his collaborations with Bungie, depicting scenes and characters from both *Marathon* and *Halo*. He also joined the jury panel for this year's *Into the Pixel* exhibition, which opens to the public at the newly revamped E for All Expo video games conference, which takes place in Los Angeles in October.



Craig Mullins has produced great artwork for games including *Age of Empires* (top and middle left) and the hugely popular *Halo*.





# Digital Camera

## Photographer of the Year 2007

Digital Camera magazine's Photographer of the Year competition is the leading contest for anyone with a passion for digital photography. This year, we're giving away £15,000 to the winner – a huge prize which should encourage you to get out there and capture your best-ever images!

See the latest issue for details



# Win £15,000!



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Check out the competition and enter your own pics at...  
**[www.photographeroftheyear2007.com](http://www.photographeroftheyear2007.com)**

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# FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

# ImagineFX

# Reviews

15  
PRODUCTS  
ON TEST

The latest digital art software, books and film releases...



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A feature-packed affordable image editor from Corel



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Free open-source image manipulation tool

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A plug-in that enables removal of colour backgrounds from your images

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A package of three male characters for Poser

### 107 iCorrect EditLab ProApp 6

Colour correction application for our artwork and photos



Jennifer Reagles reveals her love for Paint Shop Pro XI – page 104.



“The book focuses on how to create a convincing 3D human face”

## BOOKS

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Creative ESSENCE: The Face, Drawing & Painting Fantasy Landscapes & Cityscapes, Draw Manga Step-by-Step on Your Computer, Mean Machines: How to Draw Cool Cars, Trucks and Motorcycles



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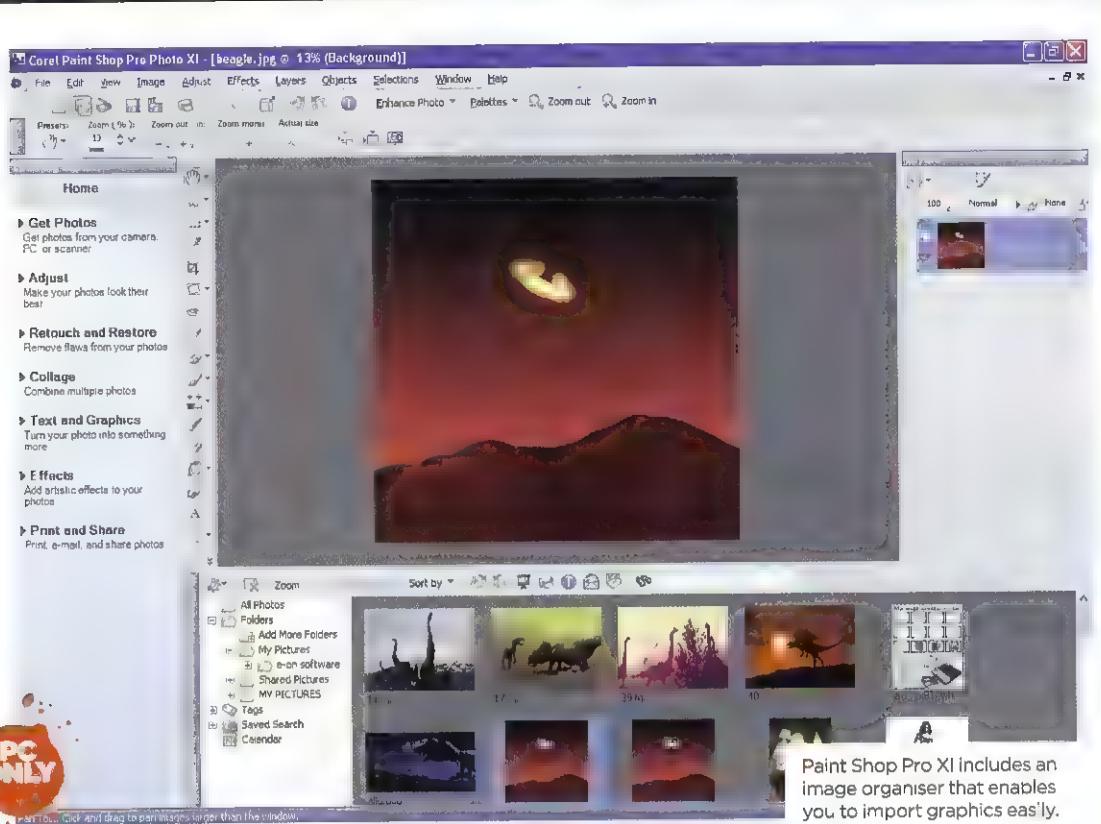
Forbidden Planet, The Fountain, The Holy Mountain, Basilisk: Scrolls of Blood, Le Chevalier D'Eon: Book 1, Gunslinger Girls: The Complete Series



RATINGS EXPLAINED Magnificent Good Ordinary Poor Atrocious



# Software Paint Shop Pro XI



## WHY I CHOOSE PAINT SHOP PRO

Jennifer Reagles enthuses about Corel's latest release

### Can you describe your work?

My work is usually described as digital mixed media, as I tend to use several different graphics applications to create one piece of artwork. My primary graphics application is Paint Shop Pro XI. Lately my art tends to lean toward the fantasy realm.

### What is your method of working?

Usually I create a character in Painter, then bring it into Paint Shop Pro to post process, sometimes adding texture and lighting. At times I create the entire image in the program as it's very easy to save custom brushes. I also often import objects that I have created in 3ds max and Illustrator.

### Why do you favour working with Paint Shop Pro?

Because I tend to create different elements of an image in different programs, the Organiser function's image-management feature helps me pull that all together with its easy browsing feature.

### What does Paint Shop Pro give you that other packages don't?

It doesn't tax my computer's memory like some other programs. It remains responsive even when working with large file sizes. Paint Shop Pro also has a wonderful balance of tools and is less expensive than other programs available, which works really well with my starving artist's budget!

### What's new in version XI that you think will be of most interest?

This new and improved version continues to expand the tools designed for digital photographers; as a result I'm interested in continuing to explore the Film and Filter effects and the Depth of Field tool.



# Paint Shop Pro XI

**IMAGE EDITOR** The new version of this popular, low-cost package enables you to browse, search and import images with the useful Organiser tool

**PRICE** £90 **COMPANY** Corel **WEB** [www.corel.com](http://www.corel.com) **CONTACT** via website

**P**aint Shop Pro has for a long time been seen as a budget alternative to Photoshop, offering many of the same tools and filters but costing about a quarter of the price. The package combines a range of powerful image manipulation tools with natural media brushes and a surprising range of vector drawing features.

What's great about this latest version is the concentration on one-stop fixes not just for common problems but for common effects too. You can reconstruct the effect of various vintage photography processes and lens filters, and you can also add filters to enhance skin tones, foliage or overall contrast. A few of these may be a little gimmicky for some users but others will be genuine time savers.

The new Curves and Levels tools are definitely a little overdue, but they work well, enabling you to improve the

contrast in difficult images with a high degree of user control.

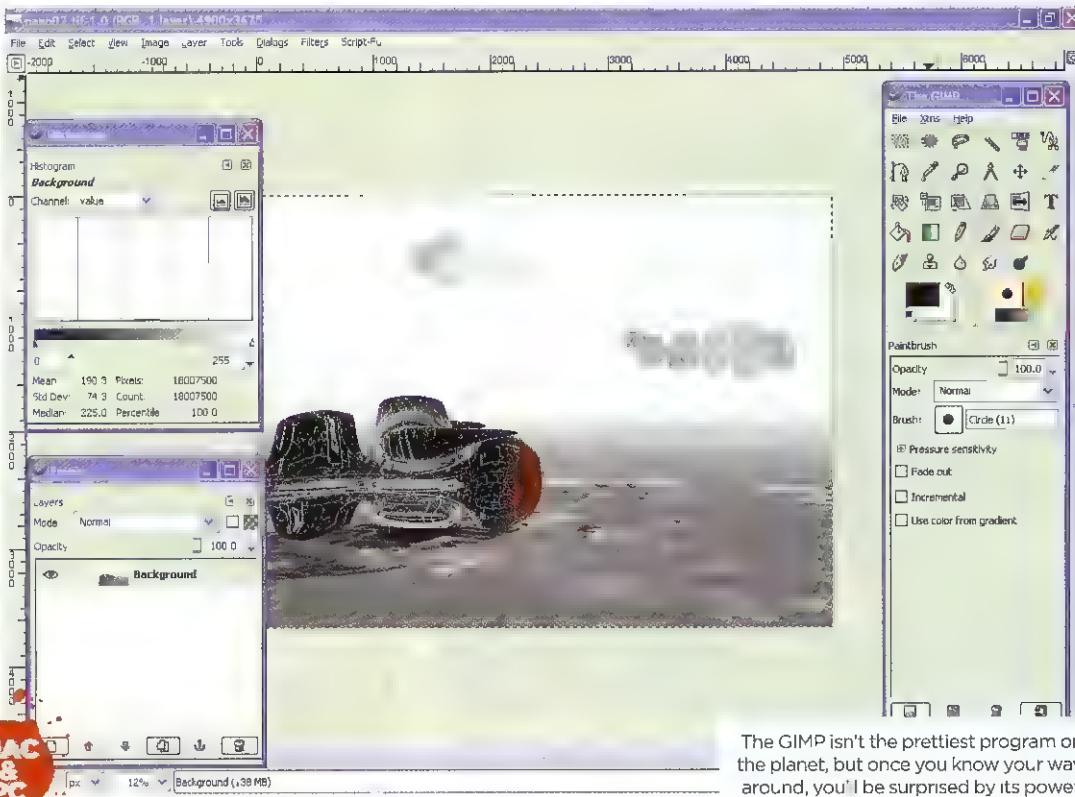
Also new are Depth of Field effects (enabling you to blur just a selected portion of your image), a skin-smoothing tool for creating that catwalk mode look and a recolouring tool designed to manipulate only certain colours within your image. These can be a little sluggish when working with print-quality images, but the results are decent enough.

Paint Shop Pro now comes with a useful built-in photo-management tool, enabling you to browse, search, tag and rate your entire image collection. It's convenient and helpful but can take a little while to update if your images are large. Artists will also welcome the addition of support for Painter's RIFF format.

For new users there's a useful CD of video workshops that work through almost every feature of the package.



Jennifer is a self-taught artist who began her digital art career about five years ago. She creates book and CD covers.  
[www.saiail.com](http://www.saiail.com)



MAC & PC

## The GIMP

**IMAGE EDITOR** Free image manipulation customised by the experts

PRICE Free COMPANY The GIMP Development team WEB [www.gimp.org](http://www.gimp.org) CONTACT via web site

**T**he GIMP is a free open-source image manipulation and editing package, which is constantly being added to by programmers who simply want to create tools for their own use. The result is a package that isn't the easiest to get to know, but which has a lot of useful features. There are plenty of palettes and loads of buttons, and all of them float aimlessly around the desktop.

Students Spencer Kimball and Peter Mattis created the program in 1995, and it's now maintained by a group of dedicated volunteers.

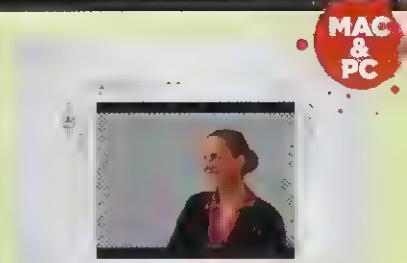
In terms of features, think of a basic image-manipulation package with all the effects filters in place, some basic paint tools, reasonable selection tools and all the gradients, text, colour correction and layering tools you'd expect from a decent picture editor.

Where the GIMP really comes into its own is with its Script-Fu tool. This is a

feature like Photoshop's Macro feature in that it enables you to automate complex tasks. However, it's much more than that. Script-Fu has the power of a programming language – enabling you (if you have the skills and the inclination) to create your very own sophisticated effects and tools. There are also plenty of other people's tools for such things as image distortion, painterly and atmospheric effects and even 3D planet building, which is available for free download.

The GIMP may have an awfully steep learning curve, but if you're prepared to put the effort in you'll probably save yourself a few hundred quid based on the cost of equivalent commercial software out there. In addition, if you're interested in programming you can get acquainted with The GIMP in ways you couldn't dream of doing with Photoshop. You can write your own scripts or – if you're really keen – add to or adapt the program itself.

The GIMP isn't the prettiest program on the planet, but once you know your way around, you'll be surprised by its power.



Removing a single-colour background is simple in Primate.

## Primate Chromakey 2.0

**PHOTOSHOP PLUG-IN**

Remove colour backgrounds with this handy little application

**Price** \$299

**Company** Digital Anarchy

**Web** [www.digitalanarchy.com](http://www.digitalanarchy.com)

**Contact** via website

**Rating**

If you combine photographic elements in your work, the real challenge is often to separate them realistically from their backgrounds. Even shooting with a blue or green screen doesn't always ensure a good clean selection and Photoshop's tools can make semi-transparent objects such as hair or glass more than a little problematic.

That's where this plug-in comes in handy. Primate makes short work of selecting any object pictured against a single-colour backdrop. Even the tricky objects mentioned above become far easier to select using this plug-in. Simply by dragging over the areas to be removed and the areas to be kept, the plug-in can give a very accurate cut-out. Further tools enable you to adjust transparency and soften the mask.

The result is a perfect cut-out of even the most problematic objects, and if you find yourself having an entire photoshoot to work on, the time-saving benefits that this provides will be a real boon.

Primate's technology is certainly powerful, but the selection tools that are already included in Photoshop are good and constantly improving, so unless you do a lot of bluescreen work it's probably an expensive investment.

**DETAILS**

**Features**

- Open source image-editing package
- Full set of image filters and effects
- Basic drawing and paint tools
- Lasso and colour selection tools
- Advanced scripting language for extending the package
- Support for layers, channels and transparency
- Image size limited only by disk

**System Requirements**

PC: Windows 98/ME/NT4/2000/XP  
Mac: OS X; 128MB RAM

**Rating**



The three male characters are compatible with Poser's face room.

## G2 Male Super Bundle

**POSER MEN** Get Kelvin, Koji and James in this package of three easy to adapt male characters

**Price** \$90

**Company** e-frontier

**Web** [www.e-frontier.com](http://www.e-frontier.com)

**Contact** via website

**Rating**

**The G2 Super Bundle provides three male characters for Poser – each based on the G2 Mesh – James, Koji and Kelvin. All the characters have their own hair and facial expressions, and there are a set of poses and clothes that work with all of them.**

The characters themselves represent different ethnic groups, and do so very well, interpreting the relevant human features without becoming caricatures or stereotypes. In addition, G2 Male is fully compatible with Poser's face room, so you can adapt the characters fairly easily.

In terms of clothes, the G2 Super Bundle doesn't fit the fantasy genre very well. All the clothes provided are decidedly contemporary. There are a good range of casual and formal clothes, and even a football kit. However, the characters' textures are detailed and realistic and the meshes work well through a good range of movement.

The pricing of G2 Male Super Bundle looks as though it's aimed more at giving users a good reason to join Content Paradise (as it's free to members) than reflecting the true value of the package. That said, the G2 males are nicely detailed and adaptable and it's likely that they'll be well supported by the content-producing community.



# iCorrect EditLab ProApp 6

**COLOUR CORRECTION** Fine-tune your colours with ease

**PRICE** £59.99 **COMPANY** PictoColor **WEB** [www.pictocolor.com](http://www.pictocolor.com)

**CONTACT** [www.pictocolor.com](http://www.pictocolor.com)

**P**ictoColor's iCorrect EditLab is a colour-correction tool for fine-tuning colours, lighting and noise levels in photos and artwork. The essential question is: do you get significantly more out of EditLab's tools than those of Photoshop or other image-editing packages you currently use?

Well, there's certainly a crossover. Brightness and contrast, levels tools, saturation and hue are all pretty well represented in most image-editing packages. However, EditLab's unique angle on the process is its use of 'memory colours'.

The idea is that the Viewer remembers what certain things look like – skin, sky, foliage and so on, and if your image contains these elements, the Viewer will expect the colours to fall into line. By clicking on an object

and selecting its memory colour, EditLab will adjust the colours in the image accordingly. You can define your own memory colours – so if you decide a dragon's skin is a certain shade of green, then you can be sure it will be the right green in every image you create containing that dragon.

Also useful is EditLab's Neutrals tool. This enables you to pick objects which should be black, white or grey within your image, and use that information to re-balance colours in the whole shot.

If you have a range of images that all require the same treatment (photos from a single photoshoot or artworks all destined for the same graphic novel) then EditLab can be a great help. You can automate colour-correction settings on a range of images and you can create and save profiles for use in other images later on.

## DETAILS

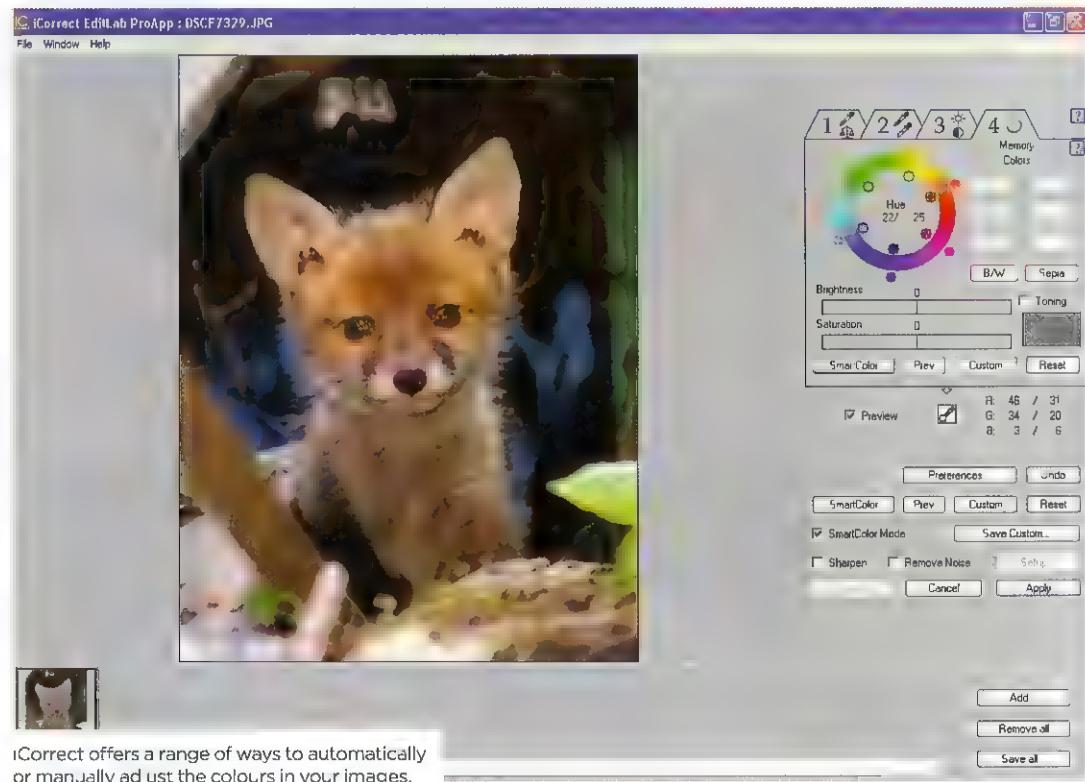
### Features

- Full range of colour correction tools
- Adjustment of neutral colours
- Automatic 'smart colour' fixes
- Memory colours for recognisable zones
- Batch processing for multiple images

### System Requirements

PC: Windows XP SP2/Vista, Intel Pentium 4, 768MB of RAM  
Mac: OS X v10.4, 1GHz processor, 768MB RAM

### Rating





## Creative ESSENCE: The Face

**3D TASTIC** Make a fantastic female face

**Managing Editor:** Daniel Wade **Publisher:** Ballistic  
**Price:** \$55 **Web:** [www.ballisticpublishing.com](http://www.ballisticpublishing.com) **ISBN:** 1521002500

**C**reative ESSENCE is a new series for publishers Ballistic. Famous for the d'artiste books, this latest addition to Ballistic's ever growing collection of high-quality titles has been long awaited by digital modellers and artists alike.

Aimed at mid to advanced digital artists, this book focuses on how to create a convincing 3D human face. The specialist team that has helped create this book include Peter Levius, co-founder of 3D.SK whose files are included on the mag neFX DVD, Paul Fodor, artist and director at Sony's PlayStation 3 cinematics department, and Steven Stahlberg, co-author of the d'artiste Character Modelling book.

Split into several chapters, the book begins with a look at the photography techniques used during a photoshoot, including the lighting set-up and photographing facial elements.

The second chapter looks at the modelling stage of creating a convincing character. It explores

designing the structure of the face, working with low poly models, detailing in ZBrush, normal maps and cavity maps. The third chapter concentrates on UV mapping, with a very informative section exploring the effects of working with skin using false colour and diffuse maps.

There is also a section on how to create a texture map for a face, which explains how to work with high-resolution textures, how to create a bald map, and the use of convincing bump and specularity maps. There are also more detailed sections on how to create a convincing eye, how to properly use sub-surface scattering, and the secrets to creating life-like bruises, black eyes, scars and aging details.

The book only uses one model throughout, which results in a very detailed guide, but some may find the lack of facial variety unstimulating, and there are no sections that look at male features. Despite that, this is a great book for experienced modellers and texture artists, and another fine addition to Ballistic's growing library.

**RATING**



## Further reading...

Drawing landscapes, the art of manga and how to tackle cars and motorbikes

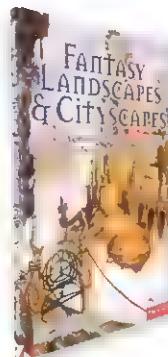
### Drawing & Painting Fantasy Landscapes & Cityscapes

**Author:** Rob Alexander

**Publisher:** RotoVision

**Price:** £15 **ISBN:** 9782940361960

**RATING**



Painting a landscape can be one of the most relaxing ways to paint, but it can be tricky to master. Aimed at serious artists, this book delves into the techniques used in traditional and digital painting. It has detailed descriptions of elements and architecture, plus lots of fantastical resources. If you're looking for help with landscapes this is a good place to start.

### Draw Manga Step-By-Step on Your Computer

**Author:** Steve & Glyn Sampson

**Publisher:** ILEX

**Price:** £10 **ISBN:** 9781905814015

**RATING**



Unlike other books on manga art this is entirely focused on the creation of one image. Essentially, this is a 95-page tutorial that goes into incredible detail. Beginning with the line work already created, the following 275 steps cover everything from cleaning the line work, to colouring minute areas of the image. It's interesting, but with only one image to work on feels as though it's lacking variety.

### Mean Machines: How to Draw Cool Cars, Trucks and Motorcycles

**Author:** Dermot Walsh

**Publisher:** Impact Books

**Price:** \$20 **ISBN:** 9781581808285

**RATING**



The book begins with a brief history of the car and motorbike. After a look at the tools needed, it then discusses the shapes and forms that vehicles come in. There are no specific details in this book, so you won't find any info on depicting tyres, but it's an OK starting point for younger artists with an interest in vehicles.

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Robby the Robot is one of the strange characters found lurking in *Forbidden Planet*.



## Forbidden Planet

**CLASSIC RE-RELEASE** 50th anniversary special edition of this landmark sci-fi tale

**Distributor** Warner Home Video **Certificate** PG **Price** £17 **Release** 18 June

**I**t's a cliché to call *Forbidden Planet* a landmark in the history of sci-fi film. But it's also true. Before it, sci-fi films were nothing but cheapo B-movies.

Forbidden Planet brought the gloss of MGM's other high-end film productions to the genre, and an injection of serious-mindedness. It was the 2001: A Space Odyssey of its time; it showed that sci-fi movies could be more than merely monster movies.

It's Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in outer space, with a dash of Freud thrown in for good measure. An Earth ship checks up on a space expedition and discovers that all but Professor Morbius and his naïf daughter have been wiped out by an unknown force. That force turns out in fact to be a monster that's been unleashed from Morbius's own unconscious...



It's a gorgeous-looking movie, with a spaceship model, animated monster, and awe-inspiring matte paintings of subterranean technology still stand up today. And in Robby the Robot, a waddling, whirring wind-up toy of a droid (the brainchild of a washing machine designer) it has one of sci-fi's cutest icons.

The extras on this 50th anniversary edition include a documentary survey of 1950s sci-fi, featuring the likes of Lucas and Spielberg, deleted scenes, and two subsequent outings for Robby (one of which is a full-length feature). Despite what some of the great and the good say in the featurettes, *Forbidden Planet* has dated: the romantic subplot now honks of cheese, and the way the plot is moved forward by expository speeches looks hokey too. Nevertheless, this remains a film that will charm viewers of all ages.

**RATING**

## Other new releases...

Hunting the Tree of Life and travelling to the Holy Mountain to try to live forever



### The Fountain

**Distributor** 20th Century Fox

**Home Entertainment**

**Certificate** 15

**Price** £20

**Release date** Out Now

**RATING**

*The Fountain* will have you raving to your friends or howling at the screen, depending on your tolerance for pretension.

It's a story of love and loss, told in three time periods. Tommy (Hugh Jackman) is struggling to cure wife Izzi's (played by Rachel Weisz) cancer. But Jackman is also Tomas, a 16th-century Conquistador hunting the mythic Tree of Life (in what may be Izzi's novel). And Tommy, a levitating slaphead of the future, floating through space in a bubble.

Sounds complicated, right? But *The Fountain* has a simple message. *Carpe diem*. Accept mortality. Be nice to each other.



It looks magnificent, the space scenes rely not on CGI, but the work of Peter Parks, a marine biologist who creates magical light shows by magnifying fluids. But there's not much to it, and it's a bit of a bore.

### The Holy Mountain

**Distributor** Tartan

**Certificate** 18

**Price** £20

**Release date** Out now

**RATING**

Alejandro Jodorowsky's 1973 film can be synopsised: a Christ-like figure meets a Master; along with the most powerful people in the world, they travel to the Holy Mountain to steal the secret of eternal life.

But that doesn't do justice to this surreal freakshow. It's more a series of hallucinatory tableaux: gas-masked troops holding aloft bloody animal carcasses as their standards; a naked woman teasing a giant electronic love machine to climax; and so on. The sets are amazing and the film is packed to the gills with memorab e symbolism. It's irresistible viewing for anyone who thinks that cinema can be more than a book with moving pictures.

*Holy Mountain* comes with a great director's commentary, which unpacks a lot of its meaning. A Jodorowsky box set containing this and two other films is also available.



Gennosuke and Oboro provide moments of romance between a bloody and violent battle to the death.



## Basilisk: Scrolls of Blood

**FORBIDDEN LOVE** A must-see series that mixes Romeo and Juliet with Ninja Scroll in feudal Japan

**Studio** Gonzo **Certificate** 15 **Price** £20 **Release Date** 18 June

**S**tudio Gonzo has a long list of animated successes behind it: Kiddy Grade, Samurai 7 and now Basilisk.

Adapted from a best-selling manga by Masaki Segawa, this adventure is set during the 16th century, at a time of immense upheaval for feudal Japan.

An uneasy truce between two warring ninja clans has lasted for centuries after being brokered by the first Hattori Hanzo. Now the two sons of the Shogun are bickering about who will become his heir and it falls to Tokugawa Ieyasu, the previous Shogun, to mediate the dispute by putting the fate of the land into the hands of ten ninja from the Koga clan and ten from the Iga.

Of course, if it were just a matter of killing each other, the contest would be a simple one if the leaders of the clans –



Gennosuke and Oboro – were not hopeless yet in love with each other. Originally betrothed during the ceasefire, the pair now fight to find a peaceful way to resolve their situation.

The animation is beautiful and the abilities of the various ninja instantly captivate. This includes ninja who can summon butterflies to one who uses strands of women's hair to bind his prey and another who uses poisoned needles. None of their abilities are unbelievably supernatural but neither are they completely realistic.

While the series isn't overtly gory even the sight of blood is stylishly animated, and the character designs are lovely to look at.

The voice acting is excellently done and there are some nice extras, including commentary from the English director.

**RATING**

## Also look at...

A French historical thriller spiced with gargoyles, and girls 'n' guns with a heart

### Le Chevalier D'Eon: Book 1

**Studio** ADV Films

**Certificate** 15

**Price** £20

**Release date** Out now

**RATING**

Part historical thriller and part supernatural whoo-unit, Le Chevalier D'Eon focuses on Charles Genevieve Louis Auguste Andre Timothee Eon de Beaumont (aka D'Eon), a French spy and diplomat known for his habit of cross-dressing.

However if fact weren't bizarre enough, this anime gives his life a supernatural spin when D'Eon is possessed by the spirit of his murdered sister, Lia. The young noble finds himself wading through a world of secret organisations and battling a mysterious Poet who turns humans into zombie-like gargoyles by inscribing 'H.O.' upon their foreheads.



Sadly the animation isn't as stunning as it could be and the setting of medieval France might not appeal to everyone. But the supernatural slant, sword fighting action, intrigue and mystery more than makes up for this and Le Chevalier D'Eon is well worth watching.

### Gunslinger Girls: The Complete Series

**Studio** Madhouse

**Certificate** 15

**Price** £30

**Release date** Out now

**RATING**

Gunslinger Girls might summon images of the Old West but the anime is actually set in Italy where a group of innocent girls are trained to become elite assassins. Each is chosen by a handler stripped of her memories, forced to become cyborgs and then brainwashed by the mysterious Agency.

The story line is disturbing but beautifully animated. Each of the innocent-looking girls has their own heartbreaking history that they've left behind and their treatment from their handlers ranges from indifference to dehumanisation.



The box set contains all 13 episodes of this very dark but short series. In this case less is more and the 'girls with guns' plot line is very much turned on its head, tugging at the heartstrings by focusing on the girls themselves rather than their new roles as assassins.

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*The video game art of...*

## YOJI SHINKAWA



**H**ardly an obvious companion for Hideo Kojima's games, with their shadowy espionage, stellar combat and ubiquitous steel, this 35-year-old's art is nonetheless an ideal one.

Since joining publisher Konami in 1991, Yoji has worked extensively on both the Metal Gear Solid and Zone Of The Enders series, originally as a character designer and conceptualist but more recently as a lead artist. His first assignment was the CG artwork for *Policenauts*, Kojima's 1994 interactive anime, which never appeared outside Japan.

Unsurprisingly, Shinkawa's weapons of choice include brush-tipped ink pens, together with Photoshop and Painter. In interviews he's cited western artists Frank Miller, Aubrey Beardsley and Willy Pogany as inspirations, though Final Fantasy's Yoshitaka Amano is a local favourite. His creature design work also extends beyond games, notably in *Godzilla: Final Wars*, a celebratory instalment of the enduring movie franchise released in 2004.



Above and opposite: A selection of Yoji Shinkawa's brilliant artwork from the Metal Gear Solid series.

